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Konjiki no Word Master

**The Unique Cheat of the Man Dragged in
by the Four Heroes**

**First Arc: The Wanderer with the Unique
Cheat**

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Chapter 1: Dragged Into Another World

Okamura Hiiro calmly analyzed the scene in front of his eyes. There stood people he had never seen before.

Furthermore, the several men were dressed like priests as one would hardly come across in Japan and amongst them was also one girl, wearing a pink dress.

He checked out the surroundings by looking around. The building was an atrium, so he could see outside well even while sitting.

But since he could see a mountain range in the distance and not just the ground, he concluded that he was up fairly high.

The building was a tower or the like. The ceiling was supported by various pillars and had unfamiliar and strange drawings on it. There were mysterious drawings like the Egyptian mural art.

What he recognized were the four people near him, wearing the same high school uniform.

They were his classmates, but he had never talked to them. So, why was he here together with them?

A magic circle like from a game was drawn on the ground at his feet.

Obviously foreign people, an unfamiliar scenery and a magic circle.

He could more or less guess what had happened from the current situation. And the girl in the dress confirmed it with her words.

“I-I welcome you, Heroes!”

Yeah, this was a so-called different world.

Up until now he had been at school. Skipping classes by sleeping the whole time on the rooftop, he had went back to the classroom to fetch his bag after school. There he found these four people here.

Like always, he had headed for his desk without so much as looking at them. They had frowned a bit upon seeing him, but he had ignored them as he didn't care.

But then a bright light had suddenly gushed out from under his feet. All five present, Hiiro included, had frozen up on the spot from the all too sudden surprise.

Everything had turned snow-white in front of him and in the next moment, he found himself in the current situation.

The priests cheered merrily. Frolicking with “Yes!” and “It's a success!”, they ignored the five of them, who were confused from the sudden situation.

However, they all looked rather exhausted and they were sweating as if they had just run a marathon.

On the other hand, the girl had long orange hair down to her waist, which made it unthinkable for her to be Japanese. Overall, she was pretty, had big eyes and adorable facial features.

She was without a doubt an eye-catching beauty.

Same as the men, the girl showed a broad smile. Most likely the five of them were summoned unquestioningly.

He never would have imagined it possible that he would experience something like that. Although Hihiro had been rather composed so far, a part of him still refused to believe it even now.

The others seemed to feel the same from being summoned as their faces showed that they couldn't keep up with what was happening to them. Then one of them finally spoke.

“H-Heroes? What do you mean?”

The guy named Aoyama Taishi had bleached hair, but an earnest expression and gentle aura.

In addition, he was tall and handsome, so he was overwhelming popular with the girls in class.

The girl lowered her head flustered at Taishi's question.

“Ah, my apologies! His Majesty personally will explain this matter to you! So please follow me!”

She looked apologetic as she said that. On a closer inspection, she appeared rather pale. It was hard to tell from her smile earlier, but like the men, she was sweating from the face as well, probably exhausted from the summoning.

Taishi seemed to notice her condition as well and likely thought it would be better to listen to her for now instead of staying there longer, since it would probably allow the girl to get some rest then.

Taishi exchanged looks with the everyone except Hihiro and nodded to affirm.

“Okay. I've a rough idea of what happened, but we'll listen to what you have to say.”

Seemingly the other four also kind of understood their situation.

Like that, the five of them headed to the King in the Throne Room with the girl's guidance. Hihiro didn't neglect to observe the area on the way.

Judging by the color of the hair and eyes of the servants and soldiers, stationed here and there, he once more concluded that this wasn't Japan.

The building they had been in was indeed a tower and stood in the middle of a big castle.

“Ohh, I appreciate your coming, Heroes.”

The man sitting on the throne said that with a refreshing smile. No need to tell him that they didn't come of their own will.

“I am sure you must be confused from the abrupt circumstances. But rest assured, I will properly explain it now.”

After saying that, he first started with a self-introduction.

The kingdom’s name was Victorias and the king unified the ‘Humas’ of Edea, of this world here. The continent was partitioned and each race had its own country.

The so-called ‘Gabranth’ were a race that had animal traits like a ‘Werewolf’ or ‘Werecat’ and lived in Passion, the country of beasts.

Likewise, the ‘Evila’, commonly known as demi-humans, were a race of ‘Demons’ and ‘Ghosts’ and lived in Chaos, the country of demons.

Lastly, the ‘Pheom’ were a race consisting of ‘Faeries’ and ‘Spirits’, but they didn’t have a country on their own. They lived in a small settlement as there were extremely few of them. Hardly anyone had seen them, since they don’t interact with other races.

And in front of them sat Rudolph van Strauss Arcliam, the unity king of Victorias.

Next to him sat the queen Māris and the girl, who guided them here, was the first princess Lilith.

Humas, Gabranth and Evila. Between these three races currently existed a tension like never before.

Particularly the Demon Lord of Chaos plotted to destroy the Humas and Gabranth.

He seemed to think that only his race was suited to rule over a united Edea with their superior strength. So he tried to make a world solely for the Evila by eliminating the Humas and Gabranth.

The Evila indeed had enormous magic power and possessed an all too brutal battle strength.

Magic existed in this world and needless to say, the stronger the magic power, the stronger the magic. The Humas had magic powers as well, but they were relatively low.

Of course magic wasn’t everything in a battle, but the magic used by the Evila was quite powerful and a human had close to no hope of defeating even a lesser demon by himself.

Even a high-ranked adventurer from the Adventurers Guild had to form a team to fight against the Evila.

The king feared that they would be destroyed sooner or later at this rate and considered destroying the Evila before that. On that occasion, they used summoning magic, which had been sealed as an old magic.

But it was sealed for a reason. It showed that the summoning magic wasn’t omnipotent.

The summoning magic consumed a lot of magic power and if used by someone untalented, it ran the risk of Rebounding and making the used magic power go out of control.

Essentially, the summoning magic could only be used by the royal family, but it didn’t mean that anyone could use it just because they were royalty. Failed attempts always resulted in a mental breakdown from being exposed to such enormous magic power, or sometimes even in death.

It wasn't a simple summoning magic. It was a heretic magic that opened a path to another world and thus carried an adequate risk.

So King Rudolph had an idea. He had a couple of daughters and let them use the summoning magic.

At this rate, Humas would be exterminated. To avoid that, it was necessary to summon Heroes from another world at all costs. An old book told the tales of Heroes being summoned in the past and saving Humas from a terrible calamity.

Heroes possessed an incredible magic power and could utilize physical abilities and magic unthinkable for Humas. Learning of this, Rudolph hardened his heart and asked his daughters. But the fourth and third princesses both failed and lost their lives from the Rebound .

(He sacrificed his own daughters...?)

Listening to the King's explanation, Hiiro scowled at his insanity. But speaking up here would make complicate matters, so he kept his mouth shut.

The Queen lamented the death of her daughters one after another, but she herself had married into the royal family and was an outsider, so she didn't have the pure royal blood and couldn't use the summoning magic. The second princess was next in line.

She managed to avoid death, but was bedridden and still unconscious at this point. That left Lilith and Rudolph as the only ones who could use the summoning magic. As they couldn't afford any more failures, he decided to do it himself.

However, everyone was against that. Precisely the loss of the King, the foundation of the country, was what could lead to the immediate demise of the Humas by the Evila.

Lilith understood that and offered herself for the country. She was scared, very scared, but at the present rate everything would vanish. If she was going to get killed anyway, she would rather choose the moment by her own will. She conducted the summoning ceremony with those feelings.

The ceremony was held with the priests' and Lilith's magic power as a medium. Lilith felt her consciousness fading during the ceremony and when she gave up, thinking that she was no-good as well, the magic circle released an obscure light.

And then the five people appeared.

"I see. So you brought us here to protect the Humas from the Evila."

Aoyama Taishi nodded a few times while listening to the explanation.

"Yes. According to the documents, there are four Heroes in total. Mh? Speaking of it, I just noticed, there's... five of you."

Exactly. Five people were summoned this time. The king looked questioningly at the nearby scholar. The scholar adjusted his glasses flustered.

"I-I have no clue! But I guess, all of them are Heroes...?"

“Mhm... Then we just have to find out. All of you, show me your abilities.”

Rudolph said that, but Hiiro and the others tilted their heads, puzzled.

“Mh? What is the matter? Do not tell me you are unable to show me your abilities?”

Taishi answered as their representative with “Indeed”.

“Recite Status in your mind.”

Everyone did as told. Of course Taishi recited as well. Upon that a status screen like from a game appeared in front of him.

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 1	
HP:	24/24	ATK:	13
MP:	120/120	DEF:	8
		AGL:	27
EXP:	0	HIT:	11
NEXT:	10	INT:	23
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master			

Chapter 2: Classmates

A few questions arose. He realized that his level was one. If this was a RPG-like world, this was only natural, since he hadn't fought with anyone yet.

But why was his MP (magic power) so high? It must be the benefit of being a world traveler, that had high magic power as he was informed just now.

By the way, HP referred to health, MP was magic power, EXP experience and NEXT indicated the necessary experience points for the next level. ATK, DEF, AGL, HIT and INT respectively symbolized attack strength, defence, agility, hit chance and intelligence. These were expressions often used in games.

He was surprised at his unexpectedly high AGL, but what he was most surprised about was this:
Innocent Bystander

It perfectly showed that he was just dragged along with the four Heroes. In other words, he himself wasn't a Hero, but just an ordinary person. Although he was concerned about his magic too, he rather pondered how to explain this situation.

While he was in thought, Rudolph asked them.

"How is it? When you look at the title, it should display Hero."

Taishi was the first to answer.

"Y-Yes, it does! It says Hero here! Uwah~ Awesome, I'm really a Hero."

He uttered with a somewhat excited voice.

"Hey, what about you, Chika?"

The one answering Taishi's question was Suzumiya Chika. She was a talkative and popular girl in class. Her open and direct attitude in dealing with people gained her their goodwill.

Her short hair was bleached like Taishi's, albeit paler. Her breasts were somewhat lacking, but her slender figure as a sports ace was quite attractive.

"Yeah, I have it too, Taishi."

"Good. And you, Shuri, Shinobu?"

He called out to the other two girls. Minamoto Shuri had pretty, glossy and long black hair.

Unlike Chika, she had a voluptuous body that attracted boys. She belonged to the tea club and the boys sometimes came by to ogle her in her kimono. Her charming points also included the kind of drooping eyes and the mole under her eye.

The other girl, Akamori Shinobu was brimming with curiosity. Active in the newspaper club, she also planned to find employment in that field in the future. She was talkative as well and smart on top of that, so everyone often asked her for tips on the exams.

Her slightly wavy, black hair hung over her shoulders. From her cat-like eyes, you could feel the strong resolution of never letting go of her prey. Moreover, she came from Kansai.

As for what these three girls had in common: They were all eye-catching beauties. And as members of Taishi's harem, they were always around him.

Shuri and Shinobu seemed to have the Hero title too. And as a matter of course, the gazes faced Hiiro next.

“What about you?”

“...Nope.”

He answered with a single word. Upon that, the others made a ruckus.

“Then... can you tell us what kind of title you have?”

It annoyed him how he was talked down to, but answered honestly nevertheless. But only one of them.

“ Innocent Bystander ...”

Now his four classmates changed their attitude at these words. They frowned and left their mouths gaping open in disbelief.

“ Innocent Bystander ...? Lilith, do you know what that means?”

“Eh, uhm... Yes. Most likely...”

Lilith looked downward, hesitant to answer. Hiiro sighed while looking at her. Then he answered in her stead.

“I'm just an ordinary person. I just happened to be in the classroom back then and got mixed up with these guys. Right?”

“Uh-Uhm...”

“Hey, wait! Okamura! What's with that tone!”

Chika said by pointing at me. But he completely ignored that and continued.

“Originally four people should've been summoned here. And that's these four here. I'm an irregular so to speak. What're you going to do about it?”

He merely stated it indifferently without any hostility or animosity. And yet, Lilith turned pale as she was the one who summoned them.

“Well, it's not just about me. These guys were brought here at your convenience too. I'm sure our families are worried about us.”

Lilith's expression became more and more heartbroken.

"You are right. I can only ask for your pardon on this matter."

The king offered his apology like that. Hiiro thought he would make excuses, but the king was unexpectedly aware of the significance of their actions.

"We were left with no other choice."

"No, to be honest, I don't care about your circumstances."

"Huh?"

Time stopped for everyone upon Hiiro's words.

"I have no connections whatsoever to these four."

"Hey, Okamura! Aren't we classmates!"

Taishi yelled enraged.

"Yeah, we're classmates. But we're merely studying together in the same room by the school's decision."

"Th-That's going too far..."

"Yes, after we finally got together~"

Shuri and Shinobu stated their opinions too.

"So you say, but I haven't spoken a single word with you in the four months, even though we're in the same class."

It was a fact. Hiiro basically liked being alone, so he kept his distance from everyone, not just these four. Sleep, eat and read. That was Hiiro's routine.

The other four fell silent from his words. Like he had said, they hadn't talked to each other, even though they were classmates. It was also a fact that they never tried to speak to him of their own accord, even if he was hard to approach.

"Okay, as I said just now, I've no connection to these four. You guys want the four Heroes, right? Then I seem to be useless?"

"Mh-Mhm..."

Rudolph groaned with a difficult expression. He was perplexed about what to do.

"Since they're Heroes, they can fight the Evils in some way, right? But I'm a no-name. You wouldn't send me out to fight these dangerous guys too, would you?"

"...Then let me ask you: What do you want to do?"

"Go home?"

“Th-The documents speak of the Demon Lord knowing a magic to send you home.”

Rudolph’s word resounded through the throne room and Lilith’s expression turned gloomy at once. Seeing that, Hihiro quietly shut his eyes.

“S-So we just have to defeat the Demon Lord quickly!”

What an idiot, Hihiro thought. Even if the Demon Lord knew such magic, why would you defeat him? Hihiro was disgusted at Taishi’s thoughtless statement.

“In-Indeed. Besides, our country is wonderful, so you will surely come to like it. You are all basically part of my family now.”

Seeing Rudolph desperately trying to persuade him, Hihiro shrugged his shoulders.

“Ah, if I may add, I’m worried about my family.”

The others felt worried as well, not just Chika.

“Th-There is no need to worry about that. Right?”

A nearby scholar was addressed.

“Ah, y-yes! As a matter of fact, you all have been forgotten now!”

“F-Forgotten, you say!?”

It was quite a shocking statement.

“Ah, please rest assured. There are forces at work to keep things coherent in your world. Once you return, it will be changed back... yes.”

(That’s... a lie.)

Hihiro definitely felt that from their attitude.

(Everything they said is surely a lie. Likely just a made-up reason to somehow convince us. A return magic, in other words a method to send us back... doesn’t exist. At least not right now. And I’m dubious about the forgotten part too...) He looked at the other four to see if any of them had realized that. Taishi hadn’t noticed at all. Same for Chika. Only Shuri and Shinobu were frowning at this story.

(Well, I don’t care about them. As for myself... I can make do anywhere.) Okamura Hihiro grew up in an orphanage. His parents didn’t leave him, they died in an accident when he was still young.

Then he was handed over to the orphanage. He made some friends there, but more than that, he loved books, so he read nothing but books all day. The books were more a friend to him than humans.

Of course he still had other relatives, but he had no real reason to return to his world. So it wasn’t really troubling for him when there was no way to return.

Lilith, knowing that there was no way to return, had a clouded expression for a while now. She might feel

guilty about the lie.

Taishi and the girls started to talk about what to do from now on after understanding that as of now there existed no way to return from Rudolph's explanation.

"Like Okamura said, you selfishly called us here. I think that's really rich of you."

Being told so by Taishi as well, Rudolph looked sullen.

"But..."

While saying so, Taishi looked at the three girls. They all snickered and he looked at the king again.

"We'll do it!"

"Really, you will?"

Rudolph raised a voice.

"Yes, we always wanted to travel to such a world."

"Yeah! We four are playing an online game together too!"

As Chika had said, the four of them had played an online RPG game in their world. They often met up and discussed about where to venture, just like they did after school before this.

Right before they were summoned here, they were just talking about their desire to venture to a world like this.

"Th-Then you will accept!?"

"Yes, but in exchange..."

Shinobu spoke after the king.

"From what I can see in the Status , we still seem to be at Level 1. In other words, beginners."

"Y-Yes, that is correct."

"We can't fight the Demon Lord like this. So... I want you to teach us how to fight."

"Do not worry about that. For that matter..."

At that time, a person clad in armor appeared.

"I will take over here, Heroes."

He kneeled down and lowered his head while he said that.

"My name is Vale Kimble. I was entrusted with the duty to teach you how to fight."

"Incidentally, he is the captain of the second division of our army."

He was a handsome guy with a noble face. Just by looking at his body, you could tell how well trained he was. His hair was green and short, whereas his eyes emitted a great willpower.

Naturally the gazes of the females focused on him. Only Chika looked at him inexpressively, as she had no interest.

“In other words, that hunk is going to train us?”

“Yes. Right now, matters have quieted down at the borders. I want you to grow stronger before it becomes turbulent again.”

“Ah, where’ll we be living?”

“We have prepared rooms for you here in the castle. Lilith will show you around later.”

The discussion proceeded and Taishi and the others seemed to have resolved to fight. At this point, Hiiro raised his hand.

“Sorry, but I’m going to act on my own.”

Time stopped again for everyone at these words.

“You see, I’ve no obligation, nor reason to fight for this country. Neither am I a hero like you guys. So there’s no point in staying here any longer.”

“Mhm... But—”

“Sorry, I’m not as sensible as these four. Well, since I’m already here, I just want to do as I want. You won’t mind, will you?”

Rudolph looked worried. Hiiro was indeed no Hero, just an ordinary person. He didn’t look all that strong either. Black hair, dark pupils and around 180m tall, but not really muscular.

His only charming point were his glasses. In terms of looks, he was inferior to Taishi.

With an appearance like that, it was unthinkable that he could fight. But it was a fact that they summoned him. Throwing him out without doing anything for him would be unreasonable.

“Mh-Mhm, I am feeling really sorry about your case. Is there anything I can do...”

“Nothing.”

“N-Nothing, you say?”

“Yeah. And it’s not like I resent you. This world should have some novel books, so it seems quite interesting.”

Hiiro was a guy as well. Of course he admired adventurers. It didn’t need to be a great adventure like for the protagonists of his books, but he certainly wanted to travel this world.

“I’ve no more business here. See ya.”

Saying that, he was about to leave, but Taishi grabbed his arm.

“Hey! Acting all apathetic, do still call yourself a man?”

“Huuh?”

Hihiro made an annoyed utterance.

“They’re lowering their heads here! Don’t you feel like helping them out even a bit?”

“Nope.”

“Why!”

“Because I’m no Hero. Or what, do you want to use me as a bullet trap?”

“Wha... Bullet trap...?”

Taishi let go of his arm.

“Forget about this guy, Taishi.”

Chika said with a sharp look.

“Don’t you two agree?”

“Ehm... I’m...”

Shuri cast her gaze down bewildered. Shinobu stared at Hihiro, then snickered.

“Ahaha, sure, why not. I mean, this looks like a game, but it’s still reality. In other words, we’re putting our lives on the line here. We’re Heroes, so we’ll get stronger, but it’s different for Okamuracchi. He’s just a normal guy. So try putting yourself in his shoes.”

Shinobu’s words shut up the other three. Because she made a sound argument. This wasn’t a game. As a matter of fact, people died in the attempt to summon them. They were that serious about it.

“R-Right. Let’s just do it ourselves.”

Taishi consented. Hihiro gave them a glance and tried to leave. At that time, “Uh-Uhm!”

The voice belonged to Lilith. Hihiro stopped and looked over his shoulder.

“Uhm... I-I am sorry!”

She looked at him worried. Hihiro said as he turned his head back.

“Don’t sweat it.”

Then he left the place for real.

Chapter 3: Magic and Magic Power

Hihiro left the castle and got out onto the streets, mulling over what to do next.

(Now then, gathering information first is a must in RPGs.) Technically he could have asked the king and such, but there was a risk of getting dragged into something unforeseen and becoming unable to leave the country when he stayed there any longer.

Therefore he left the place as quickly as possible. Besides, there were already four very capable people. He had concluded that he wasn't needed.

(First of all, what's with this Word Magic in the magic column in my Status ...? I kinda get that it's unattributed.) Accessing his knowledge from games and books, he also remembered the term Guild when thinking about magic. The king had told him that a Guild existed in this world.

Hihiro decided to ask the townspeople about the location of the Guild. By doing so, he came to know that it was close by.

He headed there to register as an adventurer for now. Living and traveling here wasn't free. Somehow or another he had to save up money.

By the way, the money of this world could be stored on a Guild Card. Likewise it was possible to pay with the card. That's what the townspeople taught him.

When he arrived at the Guild, the interior was rather crowded. Sturdy guys, likely adventurers, lined up in front of various counters. The nearest counter had a sign above it with 'Register Application' written on it.

As his black hair and dark eyes were unusual, Hihiro became the center of attention as soon as he entered. Naturally, since he was dressed in an unfamiliar school uniform. He reminded himself to buy some gear later on.

He went to the counter, assuming indifference to all the gazes on him.

"Hey, I want to register."

When he bluntly said that, the woman at the counter explained with a business-like smile.

Various quests were filed at the Guild. An adventurer earned a reward by carrying out these requests. The quests were classified into levels of difficulty from F, E, D, C, B, A, S, SS to SSS.

A Guild Card was handed out upon registering, but it served the same purpose as the Citizen Card that all citizens had. An ID so to speak.

The adventurers were ranked into the same categories as the quests as well. Although there were very few

adventures with an S rank or above. Particularly the SSS rank had only three adventurers from the Humas.

The woman at the counter gave him a white card and told him to drip his blood onto it. He pricked his finger with the small needle he received. After dripping the blood onto it, the card started to disperse and vanished.

“Huh? It’s gone?”

“Please recite Guild Card in your mind.”

When he did as he was told, the card appeared in his hand. But the card was different than before. It had been completely white, but now it had a blue border.

“The color represents your rank. From the lowest blue to violet, green, yellow, orange, pink, red, silver, golden and finally black.”

Hihiro listened to the explanations with nods. Looking at his new Guild Card, he confirmed the inscription.

Name: Hihiro Okamura		Rank: F
Sex: Male	Equipment	
Age: 17	■ Weapon:	
Race: Human	■ Guard:	
From: Unknown	■ Accessory:	
Quest:		Rigin: 0

He was glad that the ‘From’ column listed his birthplace as unknown. If it had been written that he was from another world, it would have been troublesome to explain. Equipment meant his gear. It was subdivided into Weapon, Guard and Accessory. But he asked about the one thing that bothered him more.

“Hey, what’s this Rigin stuff on the card...?”

“Mh? That is the currency...”

The woman tilted her head baffled. Naturally the people of this world knew that Rigin was the currency. But naturally Hihiro didn’t know that as he was only summoned here a while ago.

On further inquiries, he learned that Rigin nearly had the same value as Japan’s yen and that the sixth column ‘Quest’ displayed his currently active quests.

(Quite a handy card.)

With just one single card he could trade and identify himself. Moreover, the card was usually within him and could be taken out at any time.

“Where can I take up quests?”

“Please choose from the bulletin board over there. But remember that you are a Rank F. You can only

accept quests up to one rank above yours, meaning E.”

“I see. How do I raise my rank?”

“When carrying out quests and raising in levels, your rank will go up naturally.”

“In short, after I completed a number of quests, this blue border will turn... uhm, what was it again?”

“Violet.”

“Then it’ll turn violet?”

“Yes.”

Hihiro was awestruck at the utility of the card.

“Better not waste any time.”

Saying that, he headed for the bulletin board.

Church Roof Repair F
Help repairing the roof of the Amaruq Church. Experience preferred.
Reward: 10,000 Rigin

Lucky Herb Harvest F
Collect Lucky Herbs on the Asbit Plateau.
Reward: 300 Rigin per bundle

Goblin Hunt E
Kill 10 goblins in the Clair Forest.
Reward: 35,000 Rigin

There were various other quests, but he chose ‘Lucky Herb Harvest’ without hesitation. To be honest, he was uneasy about a hunting quest, since he was still Level 1. Although even a beginner should be able to hunt goblins.

But he decided to only go for hunting quests after he went up a few levels and got used to fighting.

“I understand. But please be careful about the 10,000 Rigin penalty fee in case you cancel a quest midway.”

He accepted the quest by bringing the quest note to the counter. Since there was a penalty fee, he had to avoid canceling a quest by all means. At least for now, when he didn’t have any money.

First he asked where the Asbit Plateau was. Luckily for him, it was right outside this area. And he was shown a picture of the Lucky Herb in a reference book to find out what they looked like.

(I would like to read that reference book.)

As he loved books, Hiiro's thirst for knowledge awoke. He seriously considered holing himself up in a library for a while after he saved up some money.

After seeing the picture of the plant, he acquired a big bag and left the Guild. The bag surely was meant for his harvest.

On his way out of town, he remembered the Status again. The Word Magic from it weighed on his mind.

And even if he had high magic power, it was a waste of talent when he didn't know how to use it. He needed to learn how to use magic as soon as possible.

He regretted a bit that he didn't ask about it at the counter. Magic was nothing unusual in this world. About anyone could use it and had magic power to a greater or lesser extent.

Speaking of that, he could just ask someone around here. Hiiro stopped and looked to his right. There sat a person in a chair in front of a crystal ball on a table.

(...A fortune-teller?)

The person wore a black robe and a hood hid the face, but it certainly seemed like a fortune-teller.

"Oh my? How about it, Sir?"

From the voice he concluded that it was quite an old woman.

"Nah, I don't have any money."

"Oh, is that so. But you look like you want to ask something."

"..."

"Are you not from here? I have never seen you before."

"Your point?"

He looked at her a bit suspicious.

"Fuehehe, don't look so grim. How about I tell you a bit about your fortune in commemoration of coming here?"

"Not interested."

"Fuehehe, don't say that. Take a seat."

Since he wasn't really in a hurry, he sat down on the chair in front of the desk like he was told.

"Fuehehe. Then let me begin."

She put her hands on the crystal ball and concentrated. Hiiro silently watched over her with crossed arms.

It didn't escape him that she suddenly narrowed her eyes.

"...Oho, you have a strange star fortune."

"Strange?"

"Fuehehe, everyone has a star in their heart. Each has its own shape, color, size and radiance. My divination allows me to see them. And while I have seen many up till now, I have never seen such a powerful star like yours before."

"Mhm~"

"It's powerful and to shut out a burning red, a dark blue rules over its surroundings. The shape is an immaculate sphere without a single imperfection and it shines so bright that it opens the eyes of anyone who looks at it. I see... This country aside, you are not even from this world."

He stood up at once with a clattering of the chair. How did this fortune-teller know this? Hihiro felt doubtful.

(Can fortune-telling do this? No, maybe it's... magic?) Thinking that, he glared at her with a sharp gaze. He didn't care that she knew, but he got wary on reflex.

"...Sit down. I'm not going to spread it. And while people from other worlds are indeed rare, it's not my first time meeting one."

"...You met one before?"

"Yes, just once when I was still young. The person back then had a strange star as well."

"...I see. So, what's the deal?"

"Fuehehe, you will get, no, you already have the wings of freedom. These wings will grow wide and warm in all aspects."

He didn't get what she was talking about, but it didn't seem to be anything ill-fated.

"Many will likely gather at the light you are in to pursue these wings."

"Geh, that's bad. I prefer to be alone."

"Fuehehe, well, it's nothing but one possible future. By hearing this today, this future became more likely for you. That's all."

"Mhm~ I don't get it. I'll just do what I want."

"Fuehehe, do that. Incidentally, didn't you want to ask something?"

"Yeah. Like you said, I come from another world. There's no magic in my world, so I can't really grasp the magic here, nor do I know how to use it. I have to learn it as quickly as possible..."

"Oho, I understand. A world without magic, interesting."

There Hiirō suddenly realized and looked at the old woman.

“Hey, could you teach me how to use magic?”

“I don’t mind.”

He had thought she would turn him down, but apparently she accepted.

“Do you know where magic power comes from?”

“Nope.”

That’s why I’m asking, was what he stifled to say.

“Maybe the heart or brain?”

“No, no. The magic power comes from the blood.”

“Blood?”

“Yes, every living organism has blood. That is the source for magic.”

“Oh.”

“That’s why you focus on the flow of your blood in your veins, when concentrating magic power.”

“The flow of blood?”

“Yes, look closely.”

Saying so, the old woman showed him his hand. Something like blue smoke gushed forth from her palm. It gradually assumed shape until it was a sphere in her hand.

“That’s magic power.”

“Wow. So it’s something this visible?”

“Well, it takes a lot of training to make it visible like this. I focused on the flow and imagined it gathering in my hand.”

“Imagine, huh.”

“Magic is the power to imagine. And also the power of flow. A flow of magic power is currently circulating inside this sphere like blood.”

“Sounds a bit complicated, but I get the gist of it. Anyway, it wouldn’t be wrong to say blood flow = magic power, right?”

“Indeed.”

“And to utilize the magic power, I imagine the blood flowing through my entire body. Going by that...”

While saying so, he imagined the flow of blood only going to his index finger. Upon that, his fingertip

glowed pale and became a little bit warm.

“So you can even do stuff like that. I see, so this is magic.”

The old woman in front of him had her mouth gaping open in surprise.

“Oh, what a surprise! You said it’s your first time using magic, right?”

“Mh? Yeah.”

“Nevertheless, you can control it already. You must have an incredible imagination.”

“Well, I *am* a bookworm, so I’m confident in my imagination.”

Books consisted only of words and one had to imagine the written text in one’s head. To visualize the place, person and action in one’s mind from the narrative needed imagination.

Hiiro had buried himself in books since he was small, so his imagination was well trained. Or rather, it was his only strong point that he felt confident about. When he stopped imagining, the light and warmth disappeared from his finger tip.

“Thank you. Now I get what magic power is.”

“Glad to hear.”

“One more thing, do I just chant a spell while I focus on the flow of magic power like just now when I want to use magic?”

“Quite so. Look. Fire Ball .”

The old woman held up her index finger and chanted, then a fire ball with the size of a tennis ball appeared.

“Ohhhhhhh.”

Hiiro raised an excited voice in admiration. His interest in magic was piqued by using it for the first time.

“I kept it small now, but it can become bigger depending on your imagination and magic power.”

“I see. But I don’t think I can use Fire Ball .”

“Mh? Is your attribute different?”

“Yeah, it’s unattributed.”

“...Now that’s a rare attribute. Those unattributed are unique magic users without fail. Could it be you..”

“Wait a sec. Unique? You mean a special magic just for oneself?”

“Yes.”

According to the old woman, there were eight attributes to magic: Fire, Water, Earth, Wind, Lightning, Ice, Light and Darkness. Unattributed meant having none of these attributes. In other words, someone

unattributed could not cast magic of other attributes.

In exchange, one had a magic only usable to oneself, also-called unique magic.

“By the way, unique magic is precious even in this world. Actually, not many can actually control it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Unique magic is always powerful. And I heard it’s difficult to control. And most people die from rebound as their own magic power explodes.”

That story sent a shiver down Hihiro’s spine. He never thought unique magic would be that dangerous.

“Control is important, but knowledge even more so.”

“Knowledge?”

“Yes, because one ends up with a rebound, since he does not fully understand what his own magic actually is. Knowledge of magic power, of magic and of oneself. When all these are mastered, one will be a first-class magic user.”

“I see. Thank you for telling me all this.”

“The pleasure is all mine. It’s been a while since I enjoyed a light like yours.”

He still couldn’t see the old woman’s face, but she must have been smiling as she raised her voice.

“I am always here, so drop by if you need something. Though I will charge you next time of course.”

“So shrewd.”

Then he parted with the old woman and headed for the town gate.

Chapter 4: Word Magic

(I think the Asbit Plateau is due east of here.)

Hihiro started walking towards the plateau while remembering the picture of the Lucky Herb he was shown. After walking for a while, he found it rather easily. It looked exactly like in the picture.

It had a small, white bud at its head and was growing all around.

(Even a kid could do this quest.)

It was close to the town and could be collected easily as it grew in large quantities. An easy task, even for a beginner.

(No one's around here.)

Looking around, he noticed that no one besides him was there. Then he recited `Status` and looked at the column where `Word Magic` was written, lightly touching it with his finger. Upon that, the panel changed and showed an explanation about the `Word Magic`.

(So the Help shows up after all when I click it. This really is like a game.)

Hihiro didn't just wanted to read the help. He wanted to try the magic here.

If possible, he would like to avoid showing off his unique magic, because he feared that he would get dragged back to the king if he stood out, after he finally obtained freedom.

(Well, it depends on the magic anyway.)

If all unique magic were indeed powerful, it was quite possible that his fear would come true. Besides, it was necessary to understand the magic to grasp his self, like the old woman had told him earlier.

But he didn't intend to be reckless, since there was the so-called `rebound`. Hihiro just wanted to find out what his magic was, not to die here already.

Word Magic MP Cost: 30

Imagine the magic power gathering in your finger and draw a word. An effect in accordance with the meaning of the word is brought forth. It is a unique magic with the phenomenal power to apprehend and contort the underlying principles. Single Chain unlocked refers to the possible chain length of words.

This magic was once ?%&GR!&*

For some reason the last part was corrupted and unreadable. He was quite bothered about it, but he

somehow understood this magic. Still, he wouldn't know if he was right unless he actually tried out the magic.

(So it's called Word Magic. Let's try it for now.)

With that in mind, he took a deep breath and concentrated magic power in his fingertip in the same way as in front of the old woman. Before it took him a little while, but on his second try, his finger lit up with magic power rather smoothly.

(A word, huh... Will anything do? But since it's manifesting the word...)

He drew on the ground with his finger. Upon that, the pattern glowed in a pale light. He had written the kanji for Hard while imagining the ground hardening. It was easier to imagine with kanji.

And the moment he recited Activate in his mind, the magic power from the word flowed into the ground while making sizzling sounds like on an electric discharge.

(Did that do it...?)

He knocked onto the ground. It was hard. Incredible hard. Pretty much like concrete. Until a moment ago, it had been loose dirt without a doubt.

He went around, checking the range of effect.

Clonk, Clonk, Clonk...Splat.

The ground was hardened in an area roughly 6.5m² wide.

The glowing word dispersed and vanished too. It was quite convenient that it left no traces behind, because it lowered the likelihood of his magic getting exposed. Then he reverted it with the kanji for Origin.

The electrical discharge happened again and the ground returned to how it had been before.

(This is... more overpowered than I thought.)

Hihiro realized the incredible potential of his own magic. A magic to apprehend and contort the underlying principles. It meant affecting anything with a single word.

For example, if he gave the Lucky Herbs around here the effect from the word Wither, then they would wither. If he gave a rock the effect Split, then it would break into two.

(It can change all kind of phenomena regardless... Moreover—)

With that in mind, he concentrated magic power in his finger once more and wrote another word into the ground. Upon that, a fire suddenly broke out and scorched the grasslands. The word he had written was Fire. But this time, the fire extinguished after one minute.

(Creating from nothing... Looks like I got my hands on some awesome magic.)

He exhaled in awe, realizing that the unique magic held a far greater power than he had imagined.

Still, he was happy about the usefulness of his magic. He should be able to live here without a problem with it. An almighty magic sure was handy.

(But I shouldn't forget that I still don't know everything about it. Part of the help text was corrupted and considering the output...)

He called up the Status again by saying so.

HIIRO OKAMURA	Lv. 1
HP: 24/24 MP: 30/120 EXP: 0 NEXT: 10	ATK: 13 DEF: 8 AGL: 27 HIT: 11 INT: 23
Magic Attribute None Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master	

(I knew it, it costs quite a bit of MP.)

His full MP was 120 and now it was down to 30. He had used the magic three times, so it consumed 30 MP per usage, just like the description said.

He couldn't compare it to other magic, but the consumption was most likely quite high. His MP being higher than the other numbers was a peculiarity from being a world traveler, or so he heard.

A three-digit number was quite unthinkable for a normal Level 1. It should usually be around the same as the HP. And the consumption for beginner magic should correspond with that.

In all the games he had played so far, there never had been a magic that cost 30 MP right from the beginning. It was an established fact that the strength of a magic, and in accordance to its MP cost, increased with level ups.

(I can cast it four times with my current max MP. I need to level up quickly.)

After all, the more often you could use a magic, the better. Even more so with an almighty magic like Word Magic .

(Okay, I got the magic down. Time to bring this stuff back.)

He returned to the town with the bag filled to the brim with Lucky Herbs. It would be common to get attacked by nearby monsters in such a situation, but to his luck, he reached the town without any incidents.

There he headed to the Guild to complete the quest.

“Allow me to verify the details of your quest, Hiiro Okamura-sama. You accepted the Rank F quest ‘Lucky Herb Harvest’. Please show me your loot.”

Told such by the woman at the counter, Hiiro put the Lucky Herbs from his bag on a big weighing scale.

“...Okay, that makes twenty-two bundles. Your reward amounts to 7,700 Rigin in total. Please give me your card.”

When he handed over the card, she took it somewhere. After a while she came back and returned his card. Looking at the currency column of the card, the earlier value of 0 had turned into 7,700.

“The quest is completed. Good work.”

She lowered her head politely and showed him a business-like smile like always. Hiiro gave a small nod and left the Guild.

(Good, I have money now. Guess food comes first. I still haven't eaten anything since I came here.)

Asking the villagers, he looked for a restaurant. Victorias was a big walled town, divided into the trade, craft, pleasure and living districts where a lot of people lived.

With each district being rather big, it was structured as if various towns had been merged into one.

Hiiro went to the trade district for a restaurant. When he entered one that he found on the way, it turned out that it served delicious fish cuisine. He didn't hate fish, so he decided to stay and checked the menu.

But as expected, all the dish names didn't mean anything to him. He ordered today's suggestion, since he had no clue.

“Okay~ One serving of Addicting Seafood Noodles! Please wait a moment~”

The waitress cheerfully took his order. While he waited for his food, he checked his Status again. There he noticed that his MP recovered up to 40 after having sunk down to 30 from using Word Magic three times.

It probably recovered over time when he rested, just like his stamina. But the recovery rate wasn't really profitable as it only recovered 10 MP since he used the magic over an hour ago.

(Well, rather than resting, I just walked around the town without using MP.)

If he rested in the true sense of the word, meaning sleep, then the recovered amount should be different. As he pondered about that, his steamy food was served.

A lot of seafood swam in a ramen bowl. It was full of eggs from a fish like a salmon roe, something like shrimp and kelp or brown seaweed. He took his chopsticks and stirred it.

By doing so, an exquisite fragrance tickled his nasal cavities. Instantly his stomach reported in with a growl as to demand food at once. He munched on something exquisite like a shark fin.

“Oh!”

He couldn't hold in his voice. The fin was well flavored and its fish flavor spread in his mouth. It tasted and smelled so good that he couldn't help but crave for more.

Then he drank the broth with the spoon. It was good enough to be served as a separate dish. The broth with plenty of seafood was so addicting that he would have gulped it down in one go if he didn't pay attention. It was lightly flavored, yet superb.

Next he tried the noodles. On a closer look, something like small grains were kneaded into it. From one mouthful, a sea flavor assaulted his taste buds. Mashed fish was kneaded into the noodles. Truly Seafood Noodles.

(Yeah, the addicting in the name isn't just for show.)

He finished his meal in a matter of a few minutes and could go for another two or three bowls, but he resisted the temptation, since he was tight on money. Still, 450 Rigin was cheap for it.

After he stomachached the satisfying aftertaste, he looked for an inn and made plans for the future, involving leveling up and collecting money for a while.

Chapter 5: As For the Heroes

In the meantime, the four heroes received training in magic right away. Vale Kimble, the captain of the second division from the Victorias army, was in charge of it.

TAISHI AOYAMA	Lv. 1
HP: 35/35 MP: 35/35 EXP: 0 NEXT: 10	ATK: 28 DEF: 23 AGL: 13 HIT: 19 INT: 9
Magic Attributes Fire, Wind, Lightning, Light Magic Fireball Fire, Attack, Wind Cutter Wind, Attack, Thunder Shock Lighting, Attack, Lighting Light, Effect Titles Hero, Other Worlder	

CHIKA SUZUMIYA	Lv. 1
HP: 28/28 MP: 30/30 EXP: 0 NEXT: 10	ATK: 25 DEF: 20 AGL: 21 HIT: 17 INT: 12
Magic Attributes Fire, Earth, Ice, Light Magic Fireball Fire, Attack, Grave Earth, Attack, Ice Needle Ice, Attack, Lighting Light, Effect Titles Hero, Other Worlder	

SHURI MINAMOTO	Lv. 1
HP: 18/18 MP: 60/60 EXP: 0 NEXT: 10	ATK: 9 DEF: 10 AGL: 15 HIT: 10 INT: 20
Magic Attributes Wind, Water, Light Magic Wind Cutter Wind, Attack, Water Wall Water, Support, Heal Light, Recovery	

Titles Hero, Other Worlder			
SHINOBU AKAMORI		Lv. 1	
HP:	22/22	ATK:	13
MP:	52/52	DEF:	13
EXP:	0	AGL:	24
NEXT:	10	HIT:	14
		INT:	24
Magic Attributes Water, Lightning, Light			
Magic Mist Water, Support, Paralyze Lightning, Effect, Heal Light, Recovery			
Titles Hero, Other Worlder			

Each of the four told Vale their Status .

“Oh, all of you are so outstanding!”

Listening to them, Vale widened his eyes and leaked an astonished voice.

“What’s so outstanding?”

Taishi asked as their representative with a doubtful look.

“Let me explain: Originally one is supposed to only have one attribute. Of course there are exceptions and talented individuals possess more than one, but I never heard of anyone having three or even four attributes. Moreover, the light attribute is basically only used by Pheoms. That all of you have it shows that you are truly Heroes.”

Everyone smiled, embarrassed, at the exaggerated praise. They were happy, albeit the cheating status.

“And as far as I can tell from your magic, Taishi-sama and Chika-sama are the vanguard type, whereas Shuri-sama and Shinobu-sama are the rearguard type. Your basic statistics seem to confirm this, too.”

Indeed, Taishi’s and Chika’s Status focused on attacking, whereas Shuri’s and Shinobu’s focused on defending and supporting. Their magic were in accordance with that too.

“It’s quite the balanced party.”

“Haha, just like in our online game!”

“Yep!”

Taishi and Chika looked at each other and smiled. The four of them had formed a party in an online RPG before. Even there, Taishi and Chika had been attackers, whereas Shuri and Shinobu were supporters, just like now. They were given the exact same roles in this world.

“I’m sure our Status will grow according with our role when we level up.”

“Oho, just like an RPG. By the way, what about you, Captain Vale?”

“You can call me just Vale, Taishi-sama.”

“Mh, really? Okay, Vale, what’s your level?”

“Mine? I am Level 48.”

“Woah~ Nothing less from a captain. I guess you get experience points from defeating demons?”

“Indeed. Completing quests will also gain you experience points.”

“Quests!?”

All four got hooked.

“God! There are quests!? That means there’s a Guild too?”

“Ah, yes. Adventurers are registered in a Guild.”

They all were in awe with and went “Ohh~”. The words quests and guild certainly piqued their interest as they had always admired the game world.

“C-Can we register there too?”

“Why, of course. After some basic training, I would like you to register and polish your skills.”

“Hell yeeeeeeah~!”

Vale blinked with surprise at their excitement.

“Y-You are this happy about it? Danger always follows an adventurer. I am quite surprised to see you so excited about it.”

“Man, it’s a Guild! Adventurer, you know! And quests to boot! Naturally this excites you as a gamer! Right, everyone!”

“Yeah, I’m itching to act.”

“Yes. I’m a bit scared, but it’ll be fine with everyone together.”

“Yeah~ You can’t really do without a Guild~”

Each of them voiced their opinions.

“That sounds quite promising.”

However, Vale misunderstood their optimistic thoughts, he felt hope in their brave words and showed a smile.

“Ah, but what about him?”

Taishi asked as he suddenly remembered. Chika reacted to it.

“Him?”

“I mean Okamura.”

“Oh, right...”

Chika replied indifferently as she wasn’t interested.

“He got involved in all this because of us, right? You know, I feel a bit sorry for him.”

“Oh come on, he said he didn’t resent us, so there’s no need to worry about him.”

“Mhm~ But...”

“To begin with, I don’t like his attitude.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, he’s always by himself and gives off the vibe that he can do everything by himself. It’s not pleasant to watch.”

The other three kept silent on Chika’s outburst of anger. Sure, they had been in the same class, but they never talked to each other. And not just them, they never saw him speaking with anyone else.

He was like air and gone before you noticed it. Either he skipped class altogether or paid no attention during class, since he slept or read a book.

“Be a loner elsewhere!”

“Hey, Chika, why’re you so angry?”

“It just pisses me off! He rarely attends class, yet always scores full marks on the tests! Just why!?”

“W-Well, don’t ask me...”

Yes, Okamura Hihiro certainly didn’t attend classes regularly. And even if he attended, he was either asleep or didn’t listen. Yet for some reason, he got perfect scores on his tests. Chika was angry at that unfairness.

“F-For all you know, he could properly review and prepare at home.”

Shuri uttered so merely as a possibility, not in his defence.

“Well~ There’s cram school or a private tutor too.”

Shinobu added to that.

“I don’t care!”

Chika turned away, pouting. Taishi made a weary sigh.

“Okamura-dono was a friend of yours?”

That Vale added -dono instead of -sama to his named showed the difference in their assessment.

“He’s no friend!”

“You might say... he’s a classmate, someone who studied together with us.”

“Mh, I see. But will he really be alright on his own?”

“Eh?”

“Our world is overflowing with danger. The Evila for one, but there is strife between those of the same race as well. To survive on his own, it is very likely that he will become an adventurer. But it does not seem like he possesses outstanding fighting talent like you, so...”

He might end up dead. Everyone present thought that. A heavy silence hung in the air. Although he wasn’t their friend, it was indeed unpleasant to lose a classmate.

During that, Chika was the first to start a conversation.

“Aw, geez! There’s no use to worry about such a selfish guy! Instead, let’s think about getting stronger first!”

“You sure are vigorous, Chika.”

“What, got a problem? Besides, when we defeat the Evila and bring peace, then he can live in peace too, right?”

Everyone had her mouth gaping open at these words. No one imagined that Chika, angry until a moment ago, would voice such a view.

“Chika-chan... You’re so kind.”

Saying so happily, Shuri showed a smile, whereupon Chika turned bright red and shouted.

“N-No! I was just... Aw, geez! We’re done with this topic! No more! Got it?”

The other three looked glad as if to say ‘Sure, sure’.

“Chika-sama has a point. We have to think about training you now.”

Everyone nodded upon Vale’s words. Then their magic training started.

Hihiro found an inn for the time being and brooded over what to he needed to buy from now on. He

concluded that he wouldn't last a day with his current funds.

(I really need to save up money quickly. And there's a lot of stuff I want to try out.) Saying so, he fell into deep thought on the bed in the single room of the inn.

(...My heart's beating faster?)

He repeatedly opened and squeezed his hand. By doing so, he felt that his body was unusually hot, he felt excitement.

(I'm unusually excited? Haha, guess I'm a guy after all.) The RPG-like world gave him a racing heart. A world he could only experience through books or games. Not even in his dreams would he have thought to experience one in real life.

After completing a quest and trying out magic, he felt his excitement growing. Since he was already here, he wanted to try out everything on his mind.

Luckily enough, he had an overpowered magic. If he could make good use of this unfair magic, he surely would have a worthwhile life, even here.

(Anyway, I should get some sleep for tomorrow.) His MP fully recovered after eating the Addicting Seafood Noodles. He could go out to level up right away, but so many things happened all at once today, so his mind couldn't keep up.

As that was only inevitable, he decided to go to bed for today to recovery his mentality too and genuinely start taking action from tomorrow onwards.

“Are you sure you want to accept this quest?”

“Yes.”

The first thing he did after getting up on the next day, was looking at the quests at the Guild and choosing one.

Goblin Hunt E
Kill 10 goblins in the Clair Forest.
Reward: 35,000 Rigin

Chapter 6: The Battle Against Demons

He had checked out the quest yesterday already. It was reasonable for a beginner and yielded quite the reward.

“The Goblins are the weakest demons, but they attack in groups, so please be careful.”

“Sure.”

He answered curtly, left the Guild and wanted to leave the town right away, but he had things to buy, so he went into the shopping district.

He visited a weapon shop to buy a weapon, since even the weakest demon was hard to fight against with just bare hands, looking for a weapon within the range of his funds.

When he looked around with his funds in mind, he would have to go with a short weapon like a knife. Amongst these, he found a relatively robust one with a thick blade and a good grip.

“This one.”

Saying so, he showed it to the shop owner.

“Gladly. A solid knife, that’ll be 2,650 Rigin.”

After paying, he received the weapon and appreciated the scabbard that he got as an unexpected freebie. Then he brooded over what to do about armor. A shield might be useful, but he concluded that he could just use his Word Magic when necessity arose, and left the shop.

Leaving the town, he headed for the Clair Forest in the west. He could reach it by following a straight path called the Toll Road.

During his search for an inn yesterday, he had stopped by a general store and bought five Crispy Beans for HP restoration, three Honey Toffees for MP restoration along with a map of this world.

Even if they were necessary expenses, they completely emptied his wallet. He had to complete the quests by all means or he would have to sleep outside tonight. That sounded fun in itself, but he wanted to avoid a sudden hobo lifestyle.

During his trip, he spotted something weird in front of him.

(What’s that...?)

It looked like a big volleyball. However, it didn’t have a fixed appearance and contorted itself like a sponge, blocking his path.

(Wait, could it be...?)

The famous monster for leveling up as a beginner in a RPG...

“A slime!”

His voice was somewhat filled with excitement. There the slime suddenly charged into his direction, startled by his voice.

“Wait, a battle out of nowhere!?”

He drew his solid knife from the scabbard. The slime was slow, but Hiiro got the chills when he thought about coming in contact with that disgusting substance.

The moment the slime jumped up, he swung his knife downwards accordingly. There was no resistance and the slime was cut into half, but the two parts still moved meandering about. To put it bluntly, it was disgusting.

“Don’t tell me it multiplied from being cut in half?”

In that case, a blade would be useless, so he wondered about what to do, whereas the demon writhed agonizing on the ground and stopped moving before long. Hiiro timidly poked it with his knife.

(Wait, there’s a faster way!)

He opened his `Status` . The NEXT column had been 10, but now it turned into 8. The fact that he had received experience points meant that the demon was defeated.

“Oh~ It was a demon after all. I bet it’s a weak one like the goblin. It only gave 2 EXP anyway.”

Still, he felt somewhat accomplished from his first battle and victory. At first he had feared it would pain him to kill, but it surprisingly turned out alright.

“...Still feels like a game... Or rather, like it’s none of my business.”

When he analyzed it calmly, he heard another rustling sound from behind. He turned around and there were more slimes, three even.

“They seem perfect for leveling up. But I wish there were four of them.”

Then he could have leveled up. At the time he clicked his tongue, three more slimes appeared from behind him as to ridicule him. Hiiro was totally surrounded.

“Grr, a pincer attack on a beginner?”

While he grumbled bitterly, he focused on defeating the three in front of him first. After he cut down the first and second one, a smacking impact hit his back. A slime seemingly attacked him with a charge.

“Kuh... It unexpectedly hurts quite a bit.”

It felt just as if he was hit by someone. He took his distance and checked his `Status` , seeing that his HP decreased by 3.

“Looks like I can’t play around.”

Bracing himself once more, he took a stance with his knife. Since two slimes attacked him simultaneously, he dodged them and cut one down immediately. But two more were coming from behind.

“No more pain!”

By swinging his knife around, he managed to cut down two at once. One slime remained. Hihiro killed it by charging in on his own.

Upon that, he heard a weak *PLIINK* sound over his head and opened his Status .

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 2	
HP:	21/30	ATK:	1525
MP:	120/145	DEF:	10
		AGL:	30
EXP:	12	HIT:	12
NEXT:	12	INT:	25
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master			

“Figures. That sound was from the level up. Anyway, my MP sure has an amazing gain. It went up by 25 in one level. Well, not that I’m complaining.”

Though he complained a bit about not recovering the health upon leveling up. Some games did that, so he had preferred it here too.

On his way to the Clair Forest, he kept defeating the appearing slimes.

He reached the Clair Forest alright, but he had no clue where to look for the goblins. As slimes had appeared various times, he was Level 3 now.

With no other ideas, he advanced into the forest cautiously and left marks on the trees as not to lose his way. He would use them as landmarks on his way back.

Then he heard the brushwood rustling and took a stance, thinking it was a goblin, but it was just a slime again.

“...’Nother one of you.”

Although he was sick of them already, he killed it instantly as he was already familiar with them. The quest was to kill ten goblins. As proof, he had to bring the goblin fangs back with him.

Incidentally, slimes dropped some slime substance as part of a hunt quest, but he ignored it as it was too disgusting to touch.

Going through the forest, he encountered another slime. The moment he felt annoyed about it, something

appeared from the bush to his side. And it attacked him with some kind of weapon.

WHOOSH!

He dodged it by bending his body at once, but he broke out in a cold sweat.

(C-Close call... I see, that's a goblin.)

Its appearance was identical to the picture in the reference book he was shown. A stature like a small child, but an ugly face and a club in its hand.

“Must hurt to get hit by that...”

When he glared at the goblin, he received another attack on the back and groaned. He had totally forgotten about the slime. Moreover, the goblin used this chance to attack too.

(Damn. Goblins come in groups, I can't waste time here!)

He parried the club with his solid knife. The goblin let out a creaky voice like grinding one's teeth, with drool spilling out of its mouth. Hiiro definitely didn't want to get bitten and sent the goblin flying with a kick.

(Fuh, a humanoid demon... Will I be able to kill it...?)

Speaking to himself, he narrowed his eyes as he stared at the goblin. Needless to say, he never killed anyone when he was in Japan. He had killed bugs, but never animals, so he was insecure about whether he was able to kill a living creature with a human appearance, even if it was a demon.

“...Hah. Well, I gotta survive here.”

He muttered as to convince himself.

“Sorry... but you'll be a stepping stone for me.”

Saying so, he rushed at the goblin with all his might. Hiiro had a lot of agility, although he didn't know why. The goblin didn't move as it intended to take him on upfront.

SLAAAASH!

He cut down the goblin. That made him somewhat sick in the stomach, but he swallowed it down and glared at the goblin.

“You're next!”

Afterwards he defeated the slime, whereupon another level up sound resounded. His level turned to four now. It was going well.

His joy only lasted for a moment as one goblin after another appeared in front of him. The earlier battle seemed to have attracted them.

However, Hiiro had waited for them. He concentrated his magic power into his finger tip and quickly drew a word onto the ground. The group of goblins came at him all at once.

(Good... Come here!)

Just when the goblins were right before him,

“Activate!”

He shouted and the electrical discharge sprung from the word. In the next moment, various sharp objects appeared from the ground and pierced the goblins.

“Haha, it worked.”

The goblins desperately tried to move while grimacing in pain, but they couldn't. After a while they stopped moving as they died.

The word Hiiro had written was Needle .

The area of effect was roughly 6.5m² wide, just like with the word ‘Hard’. He had waited for the goblins to enter that area. The ground had turned into a cactus and killed all the goblins on it.

(Kuh... It's more tiring than I thought.)

Lots of blood was flowing out from the pierced spots of the goblins. Seeing that, Hiiro painfully became aware that this was a real battle, that he did this and that he could have turned into this himself if he was careless. It was taught to him in a forcible manner.

(Fuh, anyway, first things first.)

He took action again right away. There were still goblins around, but confused by his weird attack, they were reluctant to attack him.

“Then let's try the next one.”

While saying so, he picked up a stone and wrote onto it the word Stop .

If all went well, it might stop the goblin's movement. He threw the stone at a goblin. The moment the goblin was hit at the shoulder, he activated it. However, only the stone was stopped. It stopped right in midair.

(Mhm, so it can't emit magic.)

As he had written it onto the stone, probably only the stone itself was influenced.

Hiiro had hoped that the effect from the stone would affect the goblin too, but sadly that wasn't the case. Only the stone itself was affected, leaving the goblin unaffected.

(Okay, next one!)

Next up he wrote Extend on the blade of his knife. Then he readied the knife and turned his body like a spinning top.

“Activate!”

WHOOOOOSH!

In a flash, the blade extended many-fold and the goblins in the distance were cut. Three of them went down at once. As far as he could tell, that left three more.

“I only need two more for my quest, but I won’t let anyone escape.”

He slaughtered the goblins by swinging his extended knife around and was so immersed in it that he didn’t notice the level up sound during it.

After he defeated all of them, he collected the goblin fangs. It was the only sharp tooth on the upper jaw. But before that, he transformed his knife back by writing `Origin` on it.

As soon as he finished collecting them, exhaustion befell his whole body. His MP was empty too, so he ate a honey toffee to restore it.

(Oh right, I gotta fix the ground too.)

With his MP replenished, he fixed the ground by writing `Origin`. Anyway, it had been a while since he moved around so much and he somehow endured that battle, which was akin to a massacre, albeit of only demons.

“Puh, never thought I was this emotional.”

He sighed while saying that as he didn’t expect himself to get worn out mentally to such an extent. It really made him realize that this was not a game.

The smell of lots of blood, the sensation of cutting through flesh, the dying screams and corpses. All of that gave Hiiro, a citizen of a peaceful country, a dreadful shock.

Feeling more exhausted than expected, he sat down on the spot to rest. But a rustling sound announced the arrival of something. It was a goblin.

“Fuh~ Guess I can only keep going until I’m used to it...”

He made a resigned sigh and glared at the goblin.

“Then bring it on! Come at me! Until I get used to it!”

Somewhat out of frustration, he swung around his weapon.

“Aw~ I’m pooped~”

Hiiro had returned to the town, but took a rest on a bench on the street. The slimes and goblins had

attacked him without rest. He had defeated them while their blood splashed onto him, so he was completely out of fuel now.

(Though I quickly raised my level thanks to that.)

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 7	
HP:	31/65	ATK:	2535
MP:	34/250	DEF:	21
		AGL:	46
EXP:	222	HIT:	20
NEXT:	87	INT:	37
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master			

Chapter 7: Bon Voyage!

He planned to go to the Guild for his quest reward after he rested a little bit more. His blood-spattered appearance drew the attention of by-passers, but he was so exhausted that he paid it no mind.

(Hah... Maybe, I can clean... my clothes with magic.)

With that in mind, he moved somewhere without people and wrote Clean on his clothes. And when he activated it, the bloody clothes became all clean again in an instant.

(When I write it on my body, I won't be needing a bath...?)

He kept it in mind to try it out later. And if it worked, he would be delighted about such a convenient power.

At the guild, the woman at the counter widened her eyes in surprise. Because he completed the quests, which demanded hunting ten goblins, with a far higher number: 22.

She looked at the 22 goblin fangs, which he presented as proof for the quest.

"I am impressed you managed to hunt so many. Especially considering that you only registered yesterday, Okamura-sama."

"Whatever, evaluate it already."

He wanted to get it over with before he was dragged into something troublesome. The woman apologized at his words and properly did her job.

"The advertised reward is 35,000 Rigin, but I can give you an extra 10,000 Rigin for all these goblin fangs you are turning in. What do you say?"

"Yeah, do that."

He had no use for the goblin fangs anyway.

"Then please wait a moment."

Saying that, she took his card and went somewhere. After a while she came back and returned his card. The money had been added to it. He brought the card closer to his chest and recited 'Disappear', whereupon the card dispersed and vanished.

Now he had enough funds for the inn for a while and could even buy a fair number of MP restoration pills. With this quest he realized that MP pills were an absolute necessity for him.

When he wanted to use the Word Magic, which by itself already had a high MP consumption, numerous times, he should have a large number of restoration pills on hand.

(I got to test out a lot of stuff and realized how important the MP pills are. I better buy as much as I can carry.) Hence he went straight to a general shop and bought the necessary items for battles, including a new weapon. It was the cheapest kind of a sword, but still cost 30,000 Rigin. The reason he bought a new one was because the blade of his knife was chipped. Well, naturally that happened when he fought so many demons. Lastly, he bought a red robe for defensive gear.

He chose it, since it had a high magic resistance and an unexpectedly high defensive value. The red was kind of flashy, but he made do with it, thinking that he would get used to it.

(Wait, couldn't I have fixed the chip in the blade with magic... Like if I wrote New or Origin while remembering how I bought it... Moreover...) Various things came into his mind, but he had already bought the sword.

(Well, it was just a knife anyway. I'll use magic from now on.)

The knife was only bought due to a shortage of funds at the beginning and he had intended to buy a sword when he saved up some money anyway, so he would now first try magic to repair the blade before buying a new one.

And when the blade actually chipped and he tried Word Magic to repair it, the blade really turned as good as new with the word New. His own magic apparently knew no bounds.

For one week since, Hihiro completed quests from morning till evening. At first he just wanted to save up money and level up, but it was surprisingly fun when he tried it.

He saw flowers he never saw before and encountered various demons. It was also quite enjoyable to think of ways to defeat those demons.

He didn't consider himself to be a battle maniac, but he might have to reflect about himself as he unintentionally got elated about how to kill a strong opponent, the real thrill of an RPG.

And by this and that, his Guild rank raised as well, turning from the blue F rank into the violet E rank. Not to mention his pile of money and levels.

The woman at the counter called him a new rising star as there certainly were hardly any beginners that completed twenty to thirty quests in one week.

(It's likely that things will get troublesome when I work here any more and the king hears about it.)

He feared that he would get told to fight with the heroes if he was that strong, which would be horrible. His freedom was the only thing he wouldn't surrender. He didn't want his fun life in the other world get spoiled from obligations.

(I guess it’s about time.)

He made his resolve while checking the contents of his large bag.

(Tomorrow I’ll leave this country.)

Yes, he resolved to go on a trip.

Enough money on his hands, a good level and above all, his mentality toughened up. With that, he could even survive during a trip.

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 18	
HP:	210/210	ATK:	89 100
MP:	640/640	DEF:	65 80
		AGL:	137 139
EXP:	4672	HIT:	77 85
NEXT:	480	INT:	102 106
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master			

Name: Hiiro Okamura

Sex: Male

Age: 17

Race: Human

From: Unknown

Quest:

Rank: E

Equipment

▪ Weapon: Short Sword

▪ Guard: Red Robe

▪ Accessory:

Rigin: 567,000

On the next day, Hiiro groaned while spreading his map on the Toll Road outside the town. It was necessary to decide where to go.

He technically had an idea. Going south, there was a big town called Frentor, albeit not as big as Victorias. It was a famous trade town.

But Hiiro rather was leaning towards going to Surge instead, a town in the west. Surge was close to the country border, right next to the continent, where the Gabranth lived.

Since he came to another world, he naturally wanted to meet a werewolf or werecat by all means.

But right now, there was tension between both countries. He didn’t think he would be able to pass the border easily. However, being an adventurer, he heard some news.

That the countries certainly had placed restrictions on each other, but lots of Gabranth were adventurers

and often went on jobs together with Humas adventurers.

The individual and nation's opinion were different things. In other words, the nation's opinion didn't represent the whole race. Some people worked together with one another.

Still, a lot of people in this world detested other races right now. They were especially out of sorts with the fighting Evila.

Nevertheless, Hihiro believed that he had to confirm it with his own eyes. To begin with, he wasn't interested in the opinion of others, priding himself with the conviction to come up with his own answer by experiencing it himself.

Therefore, he decided to head to Surge. Crossing the border would be possible one way or another as well if necessary.

But it was quite a distance to Surge. A long trip called for resolution and good feet.

On his way, he came by the Clair Forest, where he had been before. There was no longer a need to be wary of this forest, but he needed to get through there. He entered the forest and defeated the demons that attacked him flawlessly.

With his current AGI, the movements of his opponents looked like they were standing still. Their difference in strength was that obvious.

(Well, I'm not a beginner anymore.)

Hihiro was experienced in fighting even stronger demons, so the slimes and goblins appearing in the forest weren't worth mentioning.

He easily passed through the forest and got onto the Tempus Highway. Following it straight led to a small town called Ames. His plan was to stay the night there and go on tomorrow.

"Oh, a jewel slime in such a place?"

He spotted a sparkling slime shining like a jewel in front of him. As he had read the Guild's reference book once, he got a hold of the different kinds of demons.

"I can sell its jewel slime core for quite a sum. No escape, dude."

Hihiro drew his sword with the eyes of a hunter. Money was important after all. After he killed it without letting it escape, he nodded with satisfaction.

"That's a good sign. Mh? Now it's a yellow rabbit."

The next demon that appeared was a literal yellow rabbit. Its attack power wasn't all that strong, but it was quite fast. Still, not so fast as to bewilder him, because right now, he could move even faster than the yellow rabbit.

"Haah!"

He cut it into two with his sword. Three of them had shown up, but one seemingly got away. He kept the

hunt quest drop, yellow rabbit tail, just in case. Defeating the appearing demons, he headed towards Ames.

Chapter 8: An Average Guy That Won't Work For Free

In Ames he looked for an inn first of all. Luckily for him, not many adventurers dropped by here, so there were enough empty rooms, only one double room was booked.

“A single room please.”

“Eh, ah, yes. Ex-Excuse me... Are you... an adventurer?”

“...Yes?”

“I... see.”

“...?”

Hiiro inclined his head as he somehow didn't feel welcome. It was his first visit to this village, nor did he ever do anything to them.

Yet, the inn keeper treated him anxiously. It bothered him, but for now, he reserved his room and went to look around the village.

But there he noticed something strange. For some reason, he felt gazes on him. And from all directions at that. It was an atmosphere like he was an uninvited guest.

Just like the inn keeper, they frowned at him. Maybe this village didn't welcome outsiders. Well, Hiiro was only going to stay for one night, so he didn't let it bother him.

“Hey, Mister.”

At that moment, someone called out to him. When he turned around, there stood a kid. It was a girl around the age of seven. She glared at him with eyes like looking at someone suspicious. Hiiro ignored her, since he didn't like that attitude.

“Hey, don't ignore me!”

The girl got angry. Why would he have to deal with a brat? Hiiro dropped his shoulders.

“What's up, Chibi¹?”

“Don't call me chibi! Not when you're wearing some weird red robe yourself! It's intimidating!”

“...Are you a bull or what?”

Not like he wore the red robe to be intimidating. He simply wore it for defensive purposes. Although he grew attached to it after wearing it all the time.

With his black school uniform underneath, it was a surreal combination, but Hiiro didn't care at all.

"Mister, you're an adventurer, right? Why did you come to such an isolated place?"

"Isolated place?"

"Don't call it an isolated place!"

"You called it that."

Why was she so aggressive...? Hiiro couldn't come up with an answer to that, so he ignored her and walked away as it was too troublesome after all.

"H-Hey, wait!"

Ignore, ignore.

"I told you to wait!"

Turn a blind eye.

"Hey, man! Listen to me!"

Just the wind.

"Hey... Please... don't ignore me."

Her voice gradually started to tremble. She must have gotten sad from being ignored. Hiiro made a light sigh and stopped.

"What do you want?"

He stopped ignoring her as it would be difficult to stay in the village if he made him cry here. Upon that, the girl smiled energetically, but went back to glare at him right away.

"Sh-Sheesh, you're such a meanie! All adventurers are like that!"

"I'm me. Don't lump me together with others, it's discomfoting."

When he glared at her in a bad mood, the girl cowered with a shiver.

"...Hah. So, what's up? I'm busy looking around, you know."

"Eh? Why're you looking around?"

"What does it matter? It got nothing to do with you, brat."

"Uh... Uhh..."

The girl got close to tears again, so Hiiro pressed on his temples with a sigh.

"Hah. Just killing time. I got here just now and plan to stay here one night during my travel."

He looked at the girl, hoping that this satisfied her.

“Oh? You’re not going to sham the village?”

“Sham? Say what?”

According to the girl, lately certain adventurers dropped by the village, barged into the general or weapon store and forcefully haggled products, doing whatever they wanted.

“It was a group of two and they falsely charged the inn to get to stay for free.”

While he grinded his teeth frustrated, the boy clenched his fist.

“Why didn’t you refuse? You could’ve chased them out with all the villagers.”

“We cannot do that.”

It wasn’t the girl, who replied to Hihiro.

“Ah, Uncle Panis!”

The man called Panis looked to be in his late 30s. In reality he might be younger, but his gloomy expression made him look older.

“And you are?”

“You seem to be an adventurer. My name is Panis. I run a humble shop.”

That meant he was a victim of the two adventurers.

“Is it true what the brat said?”

“Yes, it is. They’re currently picking at the general store.”

“...You said you can’t chase them out. What do you mean?”

Panis looked troubled and made a big sigh.

“For some reason, they got the title deed of the village.”

“Huh? Why would they have that? Doesn’t the village chief usually keep it?”

“Yes, but the title deed was suddenly gone from the village chief’s house...”

In other words, the two stole it.

“How careless. You reap what you sow.”

“Haha, you got us there.”

Yet another new person answered Hihiro.

“You are the adventurer that arrived earlier? I am the village chief of Ames, Brey.”

“What are you doing here, Chief?”

Panis asked.

“Same reason as yours. I was told there was an outsider, so I came to check.”

It seemed that Hihiro’s arrival was immediately reported to the village chief and he came to see the suddenly visiting adventurer with his own eyes. He seemingly was relieved to see that Hihiro was just an average adventurer.

CRAAACK!

Suddenly the sound of wood breaking resounded. Everyone present faced the origin of the sound taken aback. The door of a house was burst opened and someone was thrown out.

“Mick!”

The village chief widened his eyes and shouted. The man called Mick was thrown onto the ground and crouched. Then two people appeared from the house, where he was thrown out from.

One man was fat with a bald head, the other one slender with a spiky hairstyle like a broom. Mr. Spiky Head spit out while looking down on Mick.

“Keh! Try saying that again!”

The slender man, also qualified to be called Spiky Beanpole, scowled fiendishly. Next to him, the other guy took a bite out of a fruit that was probably from the store. Hihiro named him Bald Chubby.

Mick desperately pleaded. They most likely told him to hand over the products for free and he refused to. However, Spiky Beanpole showed an irritated vein on his forehead and kicked Mick’s face.

Quite a lot of blood splashed around. Seeing that, the villagers rushed over to him. Spiky Beanpole glared sharply at the village chief.

“Huuh? Look who we have here, the chief. Got something to say? Mh?”

Hihiro calmly observed, taking him for a third-rate gangster, no, delinquent.

“M-More food.”

Bald Chubby tried to go back into the house while drooling, probably in search for more food.

“Hey, Junior, give it a rest, we’re leaving.”

“B-But I’m hungry.”

“Tch. Make it quick.”

“Okay.”

“Stop it already!”

Unable to watch any longer, the village chief shouted, but winced when Spiky Beanpole glared at him. The others close by didn't approach either, scared by Spiky Beanpole's look of menace.

(Looks like they're being compelled to accept it because these guys are beyond their power, not just the title deed) The village didn't have any capable people, so they didn't resist as they would only get killed if they challenged them.

(They could ask the army for help, but I guess the guys would just run away with the title deed then. And there's a fear for their revenge. The best solution would be for someone to subdue them.) While Hihiro pondered like that, the girl next to him looked up to him. Pretty much as if she was asking him to do something about it.

"No idea what you want, but this doesn't concern me."

"Wha! And you still call yourself human!?"

"What? Do I look like a demon or what?"

"You do! Why aren't you helping! As a fellow adventurer, you have to stop them!"

"...Listen, brat, I may be an adventurer, but I ain't some advocate of justice. Ask the Heroes if you want justice for free."

Hihiro said so composed while crossing his arms. The girl gave him a look filled with anger, it was no concern of his.

"Forget it! In the end, all adventurer are like this!"

Saying so, the girl went straight for the two guys.

"Ah, wait, Nies! Don't go there!"

Panis tried to stop her, but the girl called Nies ran with all his might. Then Panis glared at Hihiro while grinding his teeth. Still, he relaxed soon enough and sighed.

"No, I get it. This has nothing to do with you. A Hero that works for people without charge like from fairytales does not exist."

"Mh, no idea if such a person exists, but at the very least, I'm not like that. I pass on working for free."

Hihiro kept it to himself that sadly enough, he considered unprofitable things as bothersome.

"...For free."

"Huh? What?"

Panis suddenly leaked a voice, so Hihiro inadvertently asked back.

"So it just... has to be paid?"

"...."

Hihiro got a bad feeling.

“In that case, I will give you my finest weapon when you help us.”

“.....”

“Will you help us?”

“.....”

Panis looked at him earnestly. It was a pain and to be honest, it didn't concern him at all. However, the finest weapon was appealing. Just taking care of this scum for it was rather cheap.

While thinking so, he made eye contact with Panis. Looking into his eyes without averting his gaze, they stared at each other for a while. After a while, Hihiro sighed like being outlasted.

“Fine. I'll lend a hand. But keep your promise.”

Panis' face instantly brightened up, but turned gloomy again.

“I-I know I asked you, but... are you strong?”

He asked while looking anxiously at Hihiro from head to toe.

“Dunno. But at least good enough to do something about them.”

Hihiro said so by looking at the chubby and beanpole combo. Panis had his mouth gaping open from that confidence, but Hihiro ignored that and swiftly went into action.

Nies picked up a pebble from the ground and threw it at Spiky Beanpole. It pleased her how it hit him right into the face, but needless to say, the other villagers all went pale.

Spiky Beanpole's expression as he slowly looked at Nies spoke volumes: this brat is as good as dead.

Feeling his killing intent, Nies froze on the spot.

“St-Stop it!”

The village chief stopped covering in front of Nies, but was sent flying with hard punch. Then Spiky Beanpole drew the sword at his waist and pointed it at Nies. Paralyzed by fear, Nies didn't move an inch.

“Brat, any last words?”

“D-Don't...”

Nies shook her head while shedding tears, but that didn't stop Spiky Beanpole. He smiled happily and raised his sword into the air, then swung it down from there.

WHOOOSH!

Everyone gulped and closed their eyes. They all thought Nies' life was over now. However!

“OWWWW!”

The one screaming in pain and bleeding was Spiky Beanpole. Something was pierced into his sword arm.

Everyone looked dumbfounded at this scene. A blade, yes, it was a blade. His arm was undoubtedly pierced by a blade.

But the length of it was clearly too long. And they looked at the end of the blade, at the person, who performed the attack. It was Okamura Hihiro.

Chapter 9: Sword Encounter

He had extended the blade by writing ‘Extend’ on it, fully aware that its length was now roughly seven meters. However, no one present understood what had happened in this bizarre scene.

Hihiro reverted his sword by writing Origin . The blade slipped out of Spiky Beanpole’s arm with a whoosh and he groaned.

He dropped his sword from the intense pain and his arm trembled. A great deal of sweat was accumulating on his face.

“Stand back, brat.”

“M-Mister... Wh-Why?”

“I get paid, so I’ll lend a hand.”

When Hihiro said so bluntly, Nies made a slightly happy sigh of relief.

“Wh-Who are you, dude!?”

Putting up with the pain, Spiky Beanpole frantically shouted while opening his bloodshot eyes wide.

“I don’t have to answer you. See ya.”

“Wha!?”

Hihiro leaped in with an incredible speed and Spiky Beanpole couldn’t react at all. Then Hihiro slashed at him with his sword.

“Take this.”

SLAAAASH!

In one swing, the blade cut from the left shoulder into his right flank, splashing blood everywhere. Like this, Spiky Beanpole fell on his knees and collapsed onto the ground.

“Im... possible...”

Everyone thought he was dead, but he was convulsing with twitches as he was still alive. But it seemed like he completely lost consciousness. Hereupon, Bald Chubby finally seemed to notice that something was wrong and came out of the store.

“Ah... What’s this? Why’s Brother on the ground?”

“Keep the questions to yourself.”

Saying so, Hihiro once again leaped in towards him in a flash and swung his sword like before, but—
CREAAAK!

—he was stopped by a metallic sound.

(Damn! He's wearing chain mail!)

Although he had slashed him, there was no feeling of having cut flesh. Instead the sensation of a metallic resistance remained in his hand.

“M-My clothes. How dare you!”

When Bald Chubby said so, the already torn clothes ripped some more. Hihiro wanted to retort why he got angry over the clothes, but as he had figured, there was chain mail underneath the clothes.

Bald Chubby drew the broadsword from his back and swung it with a buzz.

“Mhm~ I'll die if I take a hit from that upfront, considering my gear.”

With that in mind, Hihiro took some distance for now.

“I-I'll turn you into minced meeeaaat!”

“Shut up, pig. Bring it on already.”

“Grrrr!”

Bald Chubby swung his sword with all his might. Since Hihiro knew that he aimed at his head, he dodged it by squatting down and slashed at his legs without a moment's delay. But there was a metallic sound again.

“Oh man, this pig wears full body armor? Impressive that he can move around.”

Normally it would be too heavy to even walk around. But while his movements were dull, he still managed to move around, so he must have quite the strength.

“But there's no meaning if he doesn't hit. Besides, I can fight like this too.”

While saying so, Hihiro put away his sword and toyed with his opponent by moving around swiftly.

“U-Uh, where? Where is he?”

With his characteristic speed, Hihiro had gone around to his back. The opponent was still looking around restlessly in search for him.

Concentrating magic power in his fingertip, he then wrote a word onto Bald Chubby's back.

After quickly taking his distance, he recited *Activate* in his mind, whereupon Bald Chubby suddenly turned bright red in the face and started to roll around on the ground.

“H-Ho-Hoot!? Wh-What's this! Why's it so hot!?”

He currently felt like being grilled by a fire. Moreover, his whole body was hot, not just his back.

It was a sensation like being enveloped by flames. Not something a human could endure. The word written on the back was Heat . It wasn't on the level of hot water as it even melted the chain mail. The flesh burned with a sizzle and a scorching smell hung in the air.

The villagers were dumbfounded at the sudden collapse of Bald Chubby.

“Okay, all done.”

Looking down on Bald Chubby, Hiiro showed a faint smile.

“Guh... H... Hot... What did... you do...?”

“Who knows? You'll never find out, chubby.”

He hit him into the face with all his might while saying that.

“Gueh!”

Bald Chubby lost his consciousness while his body smoked. In that moment, Hiiro heard a familiar sound in his head.

(Oh, even these guys give EXP?)

Then he went over to Spiky Beanpole and searched his pockets.

“Ah, found it. Here.”

Saying so, he passed it to the village chief.

“Don't come crying to me for it again.”

It was the village's title deed.

“And call the army to take these guys away. They won't wake up for a while, but properly tie them up.”

“Uh-Uhm...”

The village chief had no clue what was going on, gradually caught onto the current situation and looked at the defeated two once more, smiling then.

“O-Ohh...”

And then...

“YAAAAY!”

The overwhelming cheer of the villagers reached his ears. Hiiro mumbled “So noisy” with one eye closed, but no one heard him.

The village chief took his hand and thanked him in tears.

“Thank you! Thank you so much!”

“S-Sure.”

A bit bewildered, he answered. Then Panis came over as well.

“Y-You are quite a remarkable adventurer.”

“No clue. Aren’t these two just weak?”

“No, no, they are known as the ‘Harios Brothers’ and are quite skilled adventurers. Although notorious.”

He nodded shortly. To be honest, he wasn’t interested in their life story. Then he suddenly felt a light hit on his bottom. At a glance, there stood Nies.

“Man! If you’re that strong, you could have helped us from the beginning!”

“Hey, Nies!”

The village chief rebuked her, but in the next moment, everyone was surprised at Hihiro’s action. Because he lightly nudged Nies’ head with a thump.

“Oww! What’cha doing!”

“I told you, I’m no Hero. I don’t help people for free. The old man requested it this time with a reward, so I helped.”

“Wha...”

“Anyway, it was one-time thing.”

“Wha!?”

Ignoring the pouting Nies, Hihiro turned the topic to Panis. Needless to say, it was about the reward.

“Now then, can I look around your store?”

“Y-Yeah, sure.”

Panis showed an empty smile by looking at Nies, who glared at Hihiro with teary eyes and her cheeks puffed out. The village chief even offered to remit his lodging fees and he gladly accepted it.

After that, he headed towards Panis’ shop, but every time he ran into a villager, he was thanked. Earlier he wasn’t welcomed, but now he was like a VIP.

(So self-interested.)

Of course he could relate, but he didn’t have a favorable impression of them due to their sudden turn-around in attitude.

“This is my store.”

“Oh, you have armor too, not just weapons.”

Looking around the shop, he roughly checked the products.

“So, you said you would give me your finest weapon, but which is it?”

“Fufufufufu. I’m glad you asked.”

His laugh was a bit annoying. Not the least bit coquetted. Then he went to the back of the store and brought back a single sword.

“This is it!”

“Oho.”

“It’s called the ‘Piercer’.”

It looked like a Japanese sword and had the same blade length as one. The only difference was that the blade was clear like ice. It certainly was breathtakingly beautiful.

“It’s a katana specializing in piercing. It’s a kind of sword that was originally created by some people of the Gabranth. Unlike the swords made by Humas which focus on slashing with all one’s might, it has a sharp blade to cut apart the prey with speed instead of power.”

Being Japanese, Hiiro knew all that, but he kept silent.

“Of course I guarantee the sharpness of the Piercer, but its speciality are thrusts. Like the name implies, it’s a katana that can pierce anything. It may look like this, but it’s sturdy without a doubt.”

“Where did you get such a sword?”

“Through some connections. I kept it dearly so far, since I wanted to make it an heirloom.”

“I’m surprised these two didn’t take it.”

“Duh, I hid it in the basement.”

He said proudly while throwing out his chest. It must be that important to him.

“Can I really take it? I mean, it’s an heirloom, right? In other words, not for sale. I thought you would give me something from your assortment?”

As it wasn’t displayed in the store, Hiiro thought it wasn’t an article for sale.

“Well, it’s a bit regrettable, but I feel like I can entrust it to you.”

“...Aren’t you giving me too much credit? It’s not like I took these guys out because I wanted to. As I told the brat already, I ain’t a Hero.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“Mh?”

“You saved this village. We are incredibly grateful about that, no matter how it came to be.”

Hiiro looked at the sword once more and for some reason got the urge to hold it.

“...May I?”

“Sure, take it.”

“Okay, thanks.”

Saying so, he accepted the Piercer. Even though he touched it for the first time, it stuck to his hand like he had used it in forever. When he put it on his waist, it was yet again a perfect fit. His face inadvertently brightened up.

As a Japanese male, it was quite satisfying to have a Japanese sword hanging on one’s waist.

(What a lucky find.)

He gained a level and found a good sword, so he had nothing to complain about. After Panis thanked him again, he left the shop and returned to the inn as there was nothing more to do today.

But on the way someone was blocking his path.

“Mister, got a minute?”

It was Nies. She got angry when Hiiro made a big sigh.

“Why’re you looking so annoyed!”

“.....*Hah.*”

“Again!”

Hiiro wanted to tell her not to point at other people, but there would be no end to it once he started to pay heed to her, so he wanted to get this over with quickly.

“What do you want, brat?”

“Don’t call me a brat! I’m already seven!”

“Yeah, a legit brat.”

“Gr~!”

“...*Hah.* So, what’s up?”

“Tell me your name.”

“...Huh?”

“Your name! My father told me to ask you!”

“Your father? Who’s that?”

“The village chief.”

“...You’re his daughter?”

“Fufu, awesome, right~”

Nies said proudly, but Hiiro wasn’t the least bit envious.

“Ah, sure, sure. Really amazing~ I’m sooo surprised~ Amazing alright~”

“.....You don’t think that at all.”

“Duh.”

“You just admitted it!?”

She had his mouth open wide in shock, but at this rate this would really take a lot of time, so Hiiro reluctantly decided to tell him his name.

“I’m Hiiro. Hiiro Okamura.”

“Hero... So cool!”

“Huh?”

Hiiro was puzzled as he didn’t know why Nies suddenly had sparkling eyes.

“I see~ Hero~”

“...I don’t get you, but you have to report to the village chief, right? Shouldn’t you be going?”

“Ah, right! Dad’s busy tying up these guys! See you, Mister!”

“Sure, sure.”

Nies left while waving her hand energetically, so Hiiro thought how nice it must be to be young again. Although he himself wasn’t all that sophisticated, and shook his head. After all, he was only seventeen yet.

Then he returned to the inn and was treated by the inn keeper like a totally different person.

He was served a luxury dinner without ordering it, and while he was grateful for it, he wondered if his personality became twisted as he was somewhat disgusted, so he shook his head again.

After a while Nies appeared together with the village chief then. The village chief apparently came over to properly thank him again as he was busy dealing with the aftermath before.

As each villager would shower him with gratitude when he walked around the village, Hiiro secluded himself in his room in the inn, since it was annoying for him. His physical strength wasn’t exhausted at all, but he was worn out mentally.

He once again checked his Status .

HP: 320/320 MP: 900/900 EXP: 5672 NEXT: 520	ATK: 139 200 DEF: 100 115 AGL: 210 212 HIT: 112 120 INT: 189 193
Magic Attribute None Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked, Air Writing Unlocked Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master, Awakened One, Ripper	

Chapter 10: Evila

A few inconsistencies popped up. First was the abnormal gain in the `Status` . Of course he was happy about gaining two levels at once as he had been Level 18 before.

But considering that his HP had been scarcely past 200 until just now, this was certainly strange, even if he went up two levels. Same for his MP or other stats, which mostly had still been in the double digits.

(Well, I'm happy about it, but...)

Thinking so, he shifted his gaze at the `Titles` . `Awakened One` caught his attention. He figured that he got the `Ripper` one from defeating the Chubby-Beanpole combo. But he had no explanation for the former one. For the time being, he clicked it to see the help text.

Awakened One

Enhancement for a Other Worlder. Great addition to the status upon reaching Level 20. Level ups will give a small bonus from now on.

He inadvertently let his surprise show at this cheat. Being a Other Worlder had its benefits. Hihiro was quite pleased about this blessing despite not being a Hero. The next thing that caught his eye was `Air Writing Unlocked` .

Air Writing MP Cost: 100

Able to write words in the air with magic power. Activates by coming in contact with the target. It is also possible to shoot the written word and let it activate then, though it only flies straight like an arrow.

As he didn't really understand it, he tried it out. He concentrated magic power in his finger tip and wrote in midair while he imagined how he usually wrote on the ground. Upon that, a pale word appeared. It showed `Float` .

When he moved his finger, the word followed it and he imagined shooting it at the vase in the room like pulling a trigger, whereupon the word headed straight for the vase.

The moment it hit, the word stuck to the vase. After reciting activate then, the vase surprisingly floated.

“Wow, that's handy.”

Like this it was possible to attack the opponent by firing at it without having to set up a trap on the ground.

Hihiro was astonished about his own power becoming more and more unfair, but felt somewhat happy as

well. Incidentally, the floating vase suddenly fell down after around one minute.

The next day, the village chief was waiting in front of the inn to say his thanks to Hiiro again, when the inn keeper came rushing outside.

“Wh-What’s the matter?”

“Y-You see...”

Hiiro was gone. His room was completely empty with no sign of him.

“Say what!?”

In fact, he had left the village early in the morning before the sun was even up. Needless to say, he did so, because he predicted the village chief’s visit. And because it would get troublesome when the army arrived.

“Oh god, we still haven’t thanked him enough...”

“That’s so like him...”

Nies said with a smile and Panis nodded agreeing too.

“I wonder if I will ever see Hero again.”

The village chief petted Nies’ head and answered.

“You will. He’s our savior after all.”

Everyone nodded in agreement with the village chief’s words.

“Acchoo!”

While making a big sneeze, Hiiro was making his way to Surge, a city near the country border. His Status had increased drastically, so he mowed down the appearing demons like weeds.

He tried out his new Piercer too and it was easy to handle, killing demons with one strike due to its high

attack power.

“Okay, I gotta pass the Torchu Mountain Range, then the Maritone Highway leading to Surge.”

On the spread map, he confirmed his route.

“It’s still a long way.”

Grimacing from the scorching sun above him, he gazed upon the Torchu Mountain Range in the distance.

On his way, he reviewed the possibilities of his Word Magic . He had tried out various things and got to know that the Word Magic had words with temporary and permanent effects.

For example, the word Float only lasted for one minute, then lost its effect, whereas ‘Extend’ extended his blade and remained like that until he did something.

Likewise ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ were permanent effects while Flame or Heat stopped after one minute.

(Guess it goes like this? Changing the target’s nature or shape is permanent and everything else lasts for one minute?) This thesis needed practical tests. It would be fatal to get a Rebound when he used it unreasonably. His power was outstanding. He could easily see himself receiving quite the damage from a Rebound if he was unable to control it.

So he decided to refrain from using words that directly affected life and death of living creatures as much as possible. A Rebound from that would surely be lethal.

Magic meant imagination. Without a clear image, it wouldn’t activate and even if it activated, it would cause a Rebound if the control was insufficient.

Hihiro fully understood why the old woman in the capital told him that knowledge was important.

Along the way he tried out various Word Magic . He carried plenty of MP restoration pills, so he could fool around to his heart’s content, discovering a few merits and demerits.

(I wonder what the Heroes are doing right now.)

He had started to forget their faces, but he faintly recalled Taishi and the others.

“OK! Now we’re all E rank in the Guild.”

While holding the Guild Card with the violet border, Aoyama Taishi stroke a triumphant pose. The other three Heroes held a similar card.

“As expected of the Heroes. I am amazed how fast you raised your rank.”

Their instructor Vale Kimble brightened his handsome face happily.

“Yeah! We also reached Level 15! It’s going well!”

Suzumiya Chika happily gave a thumbs-up.

“But it’s still not enough to fight the Evila, right?”

“Indeed. The Evila exceed Humas in physical strength and magic power by birth.”

“Haah~ The race traits aren’t to be trifled with.”

“Yeah, even in games, humans are all-purpose, but don’t have a specialized trait.”

“So we can only rely on tactics and weapons?”

“No, that only applies to the average Humas.”

Vale denied Taishi’s utterance.

“What do you mean?”

“You come from a different world. Heroes have various traits. Increased physical strength and magic power, not to forget the light magic, the weakness of Evila. That will be a great advantage.”

“Ah, right. I think we heard that before.”

“Yes. But there is also an attribute only the Evila can use.”

“Darkness... I guess?”

The one, who answered, was Minamoto Shuri. Vale made a slightly long face.

“Yes. Darkness magic is quite strong. Many Humas already fell victim to it.”

“And our light magic copes with it, right~”

Akamori Shinobu said with a carefree smile.

“Right. While light magic is indeed powerful, it consumes a lot of magic power. If you use it carelessly...”

“That’s why we’re working on our team play.”

“Yes. Two attackers and two supporters. That gives a clear distinction for using light magic.”

“Well~ Unlike in games, we don’t have a turn system here. You don’t get much time to think during a fight~”

Shinobu made a valid point. One was always risking one’s life in a battle. Planning each attack in detail during battle would make one fall behind and at worst, cost one one’s life.

For that reason, they formed a team and supported each other. By doing so, they could at least buy time for someone to analyze the situation carefully.

That way they could determine when to use light magic as well. But perfect teamwork was needed for that.

“Listen, there are all sorts of Evila. You can defeat a weak opponent on your own, but I want you to refrain from doing so against the so-called ‘High-class Evila’.”

“Are they that dangerous?”

Shuri asked anxiously.

“Quite so. Especially the guardian squad Cruel under the direct control of the Demon Lord. Please never fight one of them with just two or less people. They are ‘Top-class Evila’, even above the High-class Evila.”

“Isn’t Cruel a force that protects the Demon Lord? I think they only consist of six members?”

“Yes and from them, the Evila called Aquinas is once again in a different league.”

Vale turned pale as he recalled something.

“I-Is he that strong?”

Taishi asked with a gulp.

“In-Indeed. Back in the days when I guarded the border, I ran into him once. Aquinas is so terrifying that you could call him the devil incarnate.”

Back then, Aquinas had just passed near the border by chance. But his overwhelming aura prompted Vale’s fellow soldiers to open fire against their better judgement.

Needless to say, their attacks couldn’t harm him, whether they hit or not. Still, it caught his attention.

He had been flying through the air, stopped in midair and looked down on them with his sharp, red eyes. At that moment, every single guard there expected certain death without exception.

Some even thought about how they could die without pain. Just by being stared at, they realized what an abnormal existence he was and that they would all die.

For some reason all their weapons turned into ash and no one knew if he used magic or not. But in the next moment, his red hair fluttered and he left.

Except for a small number, everyone had fainted.

“You sure it wasn’t the Demon Lord?”

Taishi speculated from the dreadful story, but Vale shook his head in denial.

“But I’m surprised you’re still fighting after such an experience.”

“Yeah, it makes no difference anyway.”

“No difference?”

“Yes. Even if I do not fight, Humas will be annihilated sooner or later. As a soldier, I would rather die fighting.”

“Ohh~ So imposing~”

“Not really. Because I have given up hope either way.”

Judging by his way of talking, he didn't think they had a chance for victory.

“But then the matter about summoning, about Heroes was brought up. Saviors, who protected us Humas with their enormous strength in the past. We found our last hope.”

Vale looked at the four in the eyes with a smile. They all reacted kind of bashfully.

“I see. But if they are that strong, an attack is possible at any time, right?”

“Yes, the king was doubtful about why they do not attack when they are this strong, too.”

“Mhm~ But that works in our favor~”

“Yes. However, we cannot be lenient. We need to be ready at any time for their all-out attack.”

“Yeah, we just have to get stronger!”

“Leave it to us!”

“We'll give our best!”

“Well, we'll do everything in our power~”

Vale responded with a handsome smile to the reassuring words of these four.

Chapter II: Conference in the Demon Country

The country of Demons Xaos was located far north of Victorias .

One room in the castle of the Demon Lord, located within the country, had Evila warriors sitting at a long table, looking at each other.

Three chairs were arranged on each side of the long table in the fashion of confronting each other. Five of them were occupied while another one person sat at a position overlooking them with an attendant standing next to it.

That made a sum of seven people in the room. The only standing person, a woman by the name of Kiria, spoke.

“I would like to open the demon conference now. First allow me to take attendance, beginning with the lowest ranking one like always.”

Then Kiria shifted her gaze to the person sitting the farthest away from her.

“ Sixth Rank , Grayald-sama.”

“Yep.”

A young man in his 20s with darkish skin answered.

“ Fifth Rank , Shublars-sama.”

“Here~ Fufu.”

A sociable and voluptuous woman answered with a smile.

“ Fourth Rank , Ornoth-sama.”

A man with the face of a wolf nodded.

“ Third Rank , Teckil-sama is absent today due to other commitments.”

A small click of the tongue could be heard. It came from— “ Second Rank , Marione-sama.”

—a man with a grim face, obviously a hardliner. He was frowning in a bad mood. Kiria continued without paying him any heed.

“ First Rank , Aquinas-sama.”

“Yeah.”

A man with red hair muttered quietly.

“Now onto today’s agenda. If you please, Your Highness Eveam.”

Kiria turned the topic to the blonde girl sitting next to her, Eveam.

“Okay.”

She opened her closed eyes and was about to speak, when Second Rank Marione promptly raised his hand.

“...What’s wrong, Marione?”

“It is wrong on so many levels, Your Highness. Why are we missing one person for the conference?”

“Because I gave him a job to do.”

“A job? Is it more important than this conference?”

“Yes. Besides, I was going to touch upon this in the conference anyway. Hear me out first.”

“....Is that so.”

He still didn’t look satisfied, but backed down for now.

“Okay, I will be frank with you: The Humas succeeded in summoning Heroes.”

“Is that verified, Your Highness?”

Shublars asked, so she nodded.

“Yeah, Teckil reported it. There is no doubt.”

“I see. You sent him into the Human Territory .”

Marione nodded understanding.

“Yeah, although I am having him look into the Beast Territory now.”

“Right, we need to be more wary about the Gabranth than the Humas anyway.”

“Indeed. The other day I got a report of my subordinates getting attacked. Of course they retaliated at once.”

Grayald stated as a matter of fact, but with a definite anger.

“Yeah, the Heroes certainly are a threat, but we can ignore them for now. The Gabranth with their stronger physical abilities and their ‘disguise technique’ are extremely troublesome. Moreover, they’re belligerent.”

“They can’t use magic, but have this weird power instead. I think it’s still developing, so now’s the time to strike.”

Marione said that, but Eveam shook her head.

“No, as I told you before, we will not go to war.”

Marione suddenly slammed the table, attracting everyone’s attention.

“Are you out of your mind? Our brethren are getting killed! We have to smash them before they become an even greater threat!”

“No, then we will just follow the same path as the previous king! We are pursuing a world, where all races can live in peace!”

“So we just need to eliminate all hindrances!”

“No! Doing that will only bring about hatred! Conflict calls for more conflict, instigates the flames of war and ultimately destroys our Edea !”

“Then what! Are you telling us to sit back and accept their actions!?”

“Exactly!”

“Wha...!?”

He didn’t expect her to affirm it, so he froze up.

“The previous king... My brother took power by killing our father and tried to create a world for only us Evila. As a result we have the current situation. Is this what we want? Do you call a world, where each race glares, fight and hurts each other, a righteous one?”

Everyone became quiet and listened to her words.

“My brother was too radical and was assassinated because of it. The Gabranth were probably responsible for it, but that does not matter now. Anyway, excessive domination will result in strains without fail. These strains will increase, eventually turning into conflict. Isn’t that sad? All living beings in this world have a right to live. Why do we have to fight over that...”

She expressed her words by casting her eyes down, saddened. Kiria noticed that her shoulders were lightly trembling and softly placed her hand on her shoulders.

“I’m fine, Kiria. Thanks.”

Then she raised her face and looked at everyone.

“All races joining hands would be the best outcome, but even without that, there should be a way for us not hurt each other!”

“Such idealism.”

Marione discarded it with that.

“Yes, it is. But at this rate, the flow of blood will never end.”

“We are the Evila. Why do we have to watch out for other races?”

“Life in itself is a wonderful thing!”

“...”

Eveam was seventeen, but looked like eight years old. In Marione’s eyes, she was nothing but a brat. But the power in the gaze of this brat took away his breath for a moment.

“That is why we don’t fight at full power! Waging war is just absurd!”

“Mh~ But Your Highness, all the other races ignored your letters for a peace treaty.”

Shublars was right. Eveam was repeatedly sending out letters to reconcile, but there was no reply. They didn’t respond at all.

“That’s not unreasonable. During the previous king’s reign, the killing was endless and he used to stab them in the back through means of letters too. It’s not strange to say that we are bound together with them through hatred. So it’s no wonder that they consider a treaty for peace from our side as some prank.”

With sighs, Grayald uttered so like he was speaking to himself.

“Presumably neither the Gabranth, nor the Humas can ever forgive my brother’s atrocities. I understand that. However, unless someone severs the chain of hatred, the sorrow will only increase.”

“Are you suggesting we are to be the blade to sever that chain?”

Marione said with a mocking smile.

“Indeed.”

“Impossible. We lost people too. You can’t expect them to suddenly accept that. Are you saying we should stay low until peace is achieved? When will that be? Maybe at our ruin?”

“No! I’ll protect the Evila!”

“Don’t make me laugh. Everything you said so far only endangers us!”

Even Eveam showed an expression troubled for words towards Marione’s vigor.

“Nevertheless... I’ll...”

“The Humas will train their Heroes and attack us before long. The Gabranth are just waiting for their chance, too. Either way, we’re out of time. We can only kill each other until one side perishes. Please withdraw the ceasefire!”

Yes, the reason the Evila didn’t attack other races was that Eveam used her authority as the Demon Lord to enforce a ceasefire. The Demon Lord’s orders were absolute. Since ancient times, capital punishment awaited the one that went against them.

“Let us remove all hindrances with all our might before it’s too late! Your Highness!”

Hearing these words, Eveam fell silent for a while. Lifting her head, she looked at Marione. But her expression showed no signs of yielding to him and seeing that, Marione frowned.

“I will not withdraw the ceasefire!”

“Your Highness!”

“Why don’t you calm down a bit, Marione-dono?”

“Shut up, you beastman defect!”

Marione scowled at Ornoth, who had interjected, ready to kill him.

“To begin with, why is a Taboo like you here! You’re just—”

“Shut up!”

“!?”

A sudden bellow. The atmosphere became stiff from Eveam’s shout. She glared fiercely at Marione.

“Are you defying the Demon Lord’s order?”

“Grr.... Hmpf!”

He left the room with a snort.

“Shouldn’t you be stopping him, Your Highness?”

She showed a faint smile to Shublars’ question.

“N-No... My conviction will not falter.”

Then Aquinas, silent until now, spoke.

“He has a short temper, but that’s just his own way to worry about the future of the Evila.”

Of course he meant Marione.

“I know.”

“His wife and child were killed by the Gabranth.”

Orneth quietly closed his eyes. Eveam clenched her fist feeling frustrated by looking at him. She understood that Marione held an extraordinary grudge because of that incident. Still, she believed it to be wrong to dominate out of hatred.

“You are dismissed for today.”

Looking the complete opposite from before, she left the place spiritless and heartbroken together with Kiria. The others left one by one too, only leaving Aquinas and Ornoth behind.

“Don’t take it to heart. As I said just now, Marione just has a short temper.”

Ornoth inadvertently smiled at the sudden words from Aquinas.

“No, I’m more worried about Her Highness.”

“...?”

“What do you think about her ideals?”

“...I think it’s naive. Too naive.”

“.....”

“However—”

“Mh?”

“If a world without grief really exists, I would like to see it.”

“...Yeah.”

“But as long as we’re the only ones striving for it, it will be futile.”

“You’re right.”

“...Someone.”

“Mh?”

“If there was someone unbiased against races who could act as a mediator...”

“It’s not feasible for Her Highness?”

“It’s impossible for the princess... no, Her Highness on her own. Besides, she’s the representative of us Evila.”

“Right. We need someone that is neither affiliated with the Humas, Gabranth, Pheom and Evila. He could act as a mediator.”

“Now that’s idealistic.”

“Still, you’ll continue to support Her Highness, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And I swore to support you back then.”

“.....How dutiful.”

Giving each other a faint smile, they stood up from their seats. Aquinas thought: *(A mediator... That’s really idealistic.)*

Chapter 12: Desire for Meat

The Torchu Mountain Range was a hangout for demons. Our protagonist Hiiro Okamura had to pass through there to get to his destination Surge and thus was...

“UWAAAAH!”

—running away with all his might. As for the reason, an annoying amount of demons was chasing after him.

“D-Damn! Who would’ve thought that this was the Torchu Disaster Plant!”

He slipped into a gap in the cliff, letting the demons go past him.

How did it come to this? He had finally arrived at the mountain range, but noticed that his food was running out.

While he roamed around, he found a plant growing on the roadside. That plant bore fruit, which emitted a sweet fragrance like strawberries. Moreover, the fruits were rather large and he plugged the plant, thinking it could serve as food.

However, underneath the plant didn’t have roots, but was shaped in a creepy humanoid form out of wood. It suddenly started screaming, so his heart nearly stopped beating.

And then he remembered that the woman at the counter in the Guild taught him about the demon called Torchu Disaster Plant before coming here.

It wasn’t a plant, but a full-fledged demon. Once pulled out, it screamed shrilly and attracted all nearby demons.

Not knowing that it was the Torchu Disaster Plant, he froze up on the spot without understanding what was going on, whereupon a swarm of demons advanced upon him.

(Oh man, this world’s really interesting.)

Even while thinking so, he held his breath and checked the surroundings. It looked like the demons were gone.

“Fuh. I think I could’ve beaten them, but so many showed up so suddenly...”

There were easily over ten of them. For now it was the right decision to hide.

He walked on, reminding himself to be careful about the Torchu Disaster Plant from now on.

“Still, I’m hungry.”

Even more so after running. He restlessly looked around for something eatable and sniffed out an aromatic smell from somewhere.

“Guess I’ll check it out.”

He headed towards the smell. After a while, he found a small stream and some fish being grilled nearby on skewers at a fire. The great smell stirred up his hunger.

Gulping down, he surveyed the area, looking for the one responsible for this. But as far as he could tell, no one was around.

“Mhm~”

No one around. Delicious grilled fish right in front of him. An empty stomach. And again, no one around.

“.....Time to dig in.”

He couldn’t hold himself back. Just at the moment he tried to take the fish, “Get awaaaaay!”

A terrible killing intent came from behind him, so he jumped widely to the side. At the place where he had been at before, now stood a man thrusting a wooden pole into the ground.

“Get away! I won’t give you any! That’s my food!”

While saying so, he pointed the pole at him like pointing a finger. The man had short ruffled hair with blue color. He looked like to be in his 30s. Even covered in armor, it was noticeable that he had quite a muscular build.

He carried a broadsword on his back, which led Hihiro to think that things would get troublesome if he drew it.

(Still...)

Glancing at the fish, his stomach growled again.

“Boy! Name yourself! Trying to snatch food from me, the great Arnold, is inexcusable! State your name!”

With half-opened eyes, Hihiro thought: What a bothersome fellow.

“I’ve nothing to give to you! State your name and begone!”

It seemed he had to state his name no matter what, but he considered what to do.

“.....Mh, first, hear me out.”

“What’re you acting all composed for, you thief! I won’t be tricked! This is my food! After all, I caught it!”

The man asserted by impressively throwing out his chest.

“These fish are yours?”

“Yeah! What about it?”

“Okay, hand them over.”

“Don’t take me for a fool!”

“I’m starving here, so hand it over.”

“G-Grrr! So demanding. How did your parents raise you, you damn brat!”

“Who cares about that. First of all, hand it over, grumpy old man.”

“Say what!? Who are you calling grumpy!”

He flew into a passion, making you think he would explode if angered any more. Just when Hihiro thought the man might actually transform, someone came out of the bushes with a rustle.

“O-Oji-san²...”

It was a girl around the age of ten. She had silver hair that reached to her waist, but she wore some headgear like a woollen hat that concealed her hair.

Her big eyes had clear sky-blue pupils. But right now, these eyes were filled with anxiety and her small body trembled lightly.

“O-Oh, Muir~! Give me a moment! I’ll educate this ruffian with my fist of love now!”

For some reason the man was running his mouth about him, but Hihiro glanced at the little girl, whereupon she hid herself startled.

“.....Hah. I understand.”

“Mh? You understand what, brat?”

“I won’t ask for all the fish, just share a few with me.”

“Were you never taught how to ask for a favor, brat!?”

“Huh? I won’t compromise any further.”

“You’re in no position to say that!”

Tightly grasping his pole, the man became inflated with hostility. Then he leaped at Hihiro with quite a speed. Hihiro stepped back right away, dodging the pole attack from his opponent.

(So fast... And he isn’t even serious yet.)

While dodging, Hihiro measured his opponent’s strength by observing him. But his opponent did the same.

(Mhm, this brat has some good moves.)

Arnold was just testing him, but having his attack so easily evaded from seeing it the first time, he concluded that Hihiro was quite capable. Then the two of them glared at each other from a distance.

Hihiro grabbed the hilt of his Piercer. The man also seized the broadsword on his back. Tension was in the air and silence spread, whereupon a scream resounded. It came from the girl called Muir.

Three Barbarous Kongs, oversized gorilla demons, had appeared behind the girl. They were probably lured in by the smell of the grilled fish and ready to attack the girl at any moment.

“MUIIIIIIR!”

The man drew his broadsword and went straight for the Barbarous Kongs. His speed was in a whole different league than before. The demons were startled as if there were dazzled.

Arnold succeeded in cutting off the arm that tried to seize Muir by applying the momentum of his charge in his sword swing.

“GUAAAAH!?”

While spraying blood around, it swung its other arm, but the man parried it with his sword and desperately protected Muir behind him.

“O-Oji-san...”

“It’s okay! Leave this to me and take cover.”

He tried to tell her to take shelter, but another Barbarous Kong appeared behind him.

“Damn!”

At this rate, Muir was in danger. But he had his hands full with the three demons in front of him right now.

(Kuh! What now! Do I use it... No, it would endanger Muir too...!) At that time, he heard a voice from the distance.

“Hey~ Can I eat now?”

In a completely inappropriate mood, Hihiro gazed upon the grilled fish in front of him.

“Hey, hold it! Eating now!? Color me surprised! Read the atmosphere, damn it!”

“Say what you will. By the way, having trouble?”

“I-If you see that, help me!”

“Nope. Why would I have to work for free? Ridiculous.”

“Say what!”

The man ward off the demon’s attack while his eyes became bloodshot. With the momentum of repelling it at once, he stood in front of Muir. But four Barbarous Kongs were surrounding them. With one moment of carelessness, Muir would be in danger.

...What to do?

Seeing Arnold cornered, Hiiro remained composed. His hunger won over him, his stomach growling endlessly.

(So, what to do... The growling is annoying. Do I secretly snatch some food? Nah, he’ll notice...) Just as he was staring at the sweet-smelling fish, a knife was thrown at his feet. Taken aback by the knife pierced into the ground, he looked at the culprit.

“Hey, what’s your problem, Ossan³?”

Yes, Arnold had thrown that knife.

“Okay~ Listen well, fool! Y-You can have those fish! So help me out! Th-This is a deal! If you want to eat, obey me!”

“Nope.”

“Wha!?”

He never expected him to turn him down at this point.

“Right now, I can just snatch the fish and run away!”

“You devil!”

“Can’t take a joke, huh.”

“Don’t ask for the impossible in this situation!”

Hiiro truly handled things at his own pace.

(Oh well, let’s work a bit for the fish...)

The moment he thought that, Arnold cut off a demon’s arm and that very arm brilliantly fell down on the fire.

“....Aw.”

“N-No waaaaaay!?”

The fish were cruelly squashed by the arm and got coated with sand and pebbles, making them non-edible. Seeing that, Hiiro gradually lost his spirit and then...

“...Well, time to move along.”

“Hey, hey, hold it!”

Hiiro was about to leave when he was hastily stopped.

“What? Since my pay turned into this, I lost all my motivation.”

“Grr...”

He could’ve forced Hiiro to take responsibility if it had been due to his ineptitude, but Hiiro hadn’t agreed yet and the negotiations in the form of fish had failed due to Arnold’s actions, albeit accidentally.

But if he couldn’t get Hiiro’s cooperation, he would have to fight the ferocious demons while protecting Muir. He would have had no trouble against them on his own, but since he had to protect Muir, it was difficult.

“F-Fine! Listen, brat!”

“Mh?”

Hiiro, about to leave, turned around at Arnold’s shout.

“Sheesh! It’s my last resort! I-I’ll give you some of the Aqua Hound Meat, so help meee!”

“....What’s that?”

“You don’t know!? It’s a first-grade meat! Eating it grilled, will make your tongue melt and get you addicted!”

“.....Oho.”

Hiiro’s eyes sparkled.

“Addicted, huh...”

Hearing that reminded him of the Addicting Seafood Noodles that he had eaten in Victorias . It had been delicious. Incredibly delicious. He wanted to eat it again by all means.

Therefore he reacted to the word ‘addicting’ from Arnold. As Hiiro loved eating, it was the perfect opportunity to eat something good.

“Hey, you better not be lying.”

“Huh? Of course not! But don’t get me wrong! Not everything, you hear! Whoops!”

Arnold narrowly dodged the claw of a Barbarous Kong.

“Damn it! Listen, brat! I guarantee the taste! But I’m only giving you one portion!”

At that time, a Barbarous Kong seized Muir and lifted her towards its mouth. Apparently it attempted to eat her.

“Kyaa!”

“Shit!”

Just when he thought that Muir had fallen into the enemy’s hands, its arm was chopped off.

“GUAAAH!?”

The girl fell from its hand towards the ground. Muir tightly shut her eyes, rolled herself up and braced herself for the impact. Arnold saw that and shouted. Then...

“Easy there.”

“...Eh?”

However Muir only received a soft sensation. Not a shred of pain. When she slowly opened her eyes, there stood Hiiro with Piercer in his hand.

“...Can you stand?”

“Eh, ah... Yes.”

“Then stand up. And you’re in the way, stand back.”

Muir looked at Hiiro absent-mindedly. Arnold made a sigh of relief once he confirmed Muir’s well-being. However, Hiiro frowned with displeasure, bothered by their attitudes.

“Hey, get away already, Chibi.”

“Ah, yes...”

While saying so, she distanced herself from him.

“Old man, don’t stare into empty space and fight!”

“Sh-Shut up! Right back at you, don’t blame me when you die!”

“Ridiculous. As if these guys could kill me.”

Arnold took a stance with his sword for attacking and felt a shiver running down his back as he sensed Hiiro’s thirst for blood.

Hiiro totally intended to slaughter the enemy. To kill them without mercy. That was how he handled demons attacking him.

His hostility void of any other emotions turned into bloodlust and overruled the area. Even the Barbarous Kongs reacted to that and all four focused on Hiiro.

“Too troublesome to deal with them one after another. Old man, line them up.”

“Huh!? Say what?”

“Just do it. Talk later.”

“You little... Fine!”

Sighing with resignation, Arnold sharply glared at the scattered Barbarous Kongs.

“I’ll do it, but fall back if you don’t want to get dragged into it.”

“So bossy.”

Even while complaining, Hiiro took a step backwards, curious about what he would do. Then Arnold held his broadsword with a backhand grip and pushed the sword from the ground upwards while spinning.

“ Explosive Wind Claw !”

Suddenly an enormous blast raged upwards from the ground, no, with Arnold as the center. Even Hiiro, standing further away, got a bit wobbly.

The demons in the maelstrom were lifted up into the air with no way to resist.

“Oho, not bad.”

Seeing that, Hiiro muttered in admiration. Arnold could’ve sent them flying like that at any time, but didn’t do so as Muir had been close by.

(I don’t feel any magic power from it. It isn’t magic?) The Barbarous Kongs were whirled up in midair while vacuum blades cut up their bodies. Before long, they fell down, all lined up like Hiiro had requested.

“Hmm, good enough in the air?”

“Yeah, perfect.”

Hihiro answered, then aimed at the Barbarous Kongs falling before his sword.

“H-Hey, what are you...?”

“Shut up and watch.”

He bluntly discarded Arnold’s question. Arnold became sullen, but watched attentively like he was told.

Hihiro concentrated magic power in his fingertip and wrote ‘Extend’ on his blade. Yes, he used Word Magic .

“Perforate, Piercer.”

Then the rapidly extending blade pierced through the falling Barbarous Kongs. It smoothly went through the flesh, uncertain if it was due to the gravity or the sword’s sharpness.

Arnold had his mouth gaping wide open at this scene. Noticing little of that, Hihiro slowly let his sword drop to in front of him after he was sure that it had pierced all four of them.

The ground shook greatly upon the impact from the fall of four Barbarous Kongs. The four were tied together through the extended Piercer.

Hihiro felt through the blade how they passed away one after another while groaning.

“One skewer of Barbarous Kongs ready.”

These words marked the end of the battle.

Chapter 13: Tasting the Aqua Hound Meat

The battle ended and Hiiro reverted the length of his sword by writing *Origin* on it. At any rate, the sharpness of the piercing could only be called first-rate. It easily went through the opponents like a hot knife through butter.

(Nothing less from a sword specializing in piercing.) “Y-You... what did you do?”

“Shouldn’t you be worrying about the chibi instead?”

He had no intention to explain it, so he quickly changed the topic. Then Arnold quickly shouted Muir’s name. She slowly appeared from behind a rock, where she had been hiding.

“A-Are you hurt?”

“N-No.”

“G-Good~”

As he was relieved from the bottom of his heart, he sunk down on the ground. After a glance at him, Hiiro sheathed his sword. At that moment, his stomach growled and he headed towards Arnold.

“Hey, old man. Keep your promise.”

“.....What are you talking about?”

“Oho...”

Hiiro drew his sword from the sheath a bit with a clink.

“J-Just kidding! Put that away!”

The man shouted in a panic. Hiiro sighed in a bad mood.

“Just give me that addicting meat. My stomach is totally empty.”

“.....Hah. Sorry, Muir. I never imagined we would eat it here...”

He dropped his shoulders with a ‘boo-hoo-hoo’, but Muir shook her head shortly.

“N-No. He helped us after all. B-Besides, food tastes better with more people.”

“Uohhh! What a good child you are, Muir!”

He embraced Muir while shouting emotionally. Normally this would be a heart-warming scene, but Hiiro said while pressing onto his stomach.

“Just get on with it. I’m starving here.”

A vein stood out on Arnold’s forehead due to his attitude, but he realized that it was no use saying anything to Hihiro, so he led the two with a sigh.

“Come here. I’ll prepare it.”

The two of them followed after Arnold to the earlier fireplace.

“Ehm~ I think it was... Ah, here it is.”

He rummaged about behind some rock and got out some large bag. Opening that bag, he took out yet another bag. Something thick and heavy seemed to be inside that bag.

“Is that it?”

“Yeah, inside is.... this!”

What he pulled out was meat tied up with a string so that it wouldn’t fall apart.

“This is the Aqua Hound Meat . Moreover, it’s the shanks, the most delicious part!”

He thrust it before him as if to ask for his opinion.

“Whatever, let me eat already.”

“You sure are a self-important brat. Eat some fruit until it’s done. But leave some for me.”

“...I’ll try my best.”

“No, no. Leave some for me!”

Hihiro ate two out of the six red fruits that were the size of a fist, which Arnold took out of the bag. It was a Gorin Fruit that he had often eaten before.

“More.”

“Already! I gotta prepare the meat too, so show some patience.”

Saying so, the man took out a big stone from the fire place. By the looks of it, the bright red stone was insanely hot.

The meat was placed on top of it. Then it sizzled appetizingly and gradually changed color brilliantly, releasing meat juice and an aromatic smell.

All three couldn’t help but gulp down their saliva. The young Muir was unable to take her eyes off the meat either.

“Hey, isn’t it good already?”

At the end of his patience, Hihiro asked, but Arnold shook his head.

“No, not yet. A certain procedure is needed to bring out the best taste of this meat.”

“Certain procedure?”

The juice temporarily stopped oozing out of the meat, so the string holding it together was cut. By doing so, the meat gradually swelled up.

“O-Oh, what’s this!?”

“That’s meat swelling, unique to Aqua Hound Meat ! Letting out the excess fat from the meat, it swells up. It approximately becomes thrice as big.”

Amazing. Its original size was already around the size of a volleyball. Three times of that was rather big.

When the swelling hit its peak, it was similar to jelly, not like meat at all. He questioned if it was really meat, but the smell answered it for him. Before he knew it, his drool overflowed.

“Okay, Muir, get the containers!”

Arnold was pretty excited too. Muir took out three containers from the bag while nodding happily.

Arnold quickly cut the meat in a straight horizontal line with the knife hanging from his waist. Surprisingly enough, the knife cut through it without any resistance as if it was pudding. After splitting it into three portions, he put it into the three containers.

“H-Here you go! Ah, don’t eat yet, brat!”

Hihiro tried to dig in without delay, but Arnold stopped him.

“What? Do you want to torture me?”

His stomach was giving the alarm for a while now. If left alone any longer, something might happen.

“Don’t be stupid. It’ll only be perfect with this!”

Saying so, he pulled out a long container with a sauce from the bag.

“And that is?”

“A special sauce made from the Orczy Fruit !”

“Whatever. It’ll taste even better with that?”

“Yeah, forget about getting addicted, it’ll send you straight to heaven.”

“Heh, interesting. Count me in!”

The sauce had a color like ketchup, but was more fluid than solid. It had a faint sweet and fruity smell.

“Okay! Now it’s perfect!”

“Yep!”

“Mhm.”

Each of them responded.

““““Itadakimasu!””””

Hiiro used the received fork in place of a knife and cut into the meat very easily. It was incredibly tender. He cut an appropriate mouthful and ate it.

“Ohh.....!?”

A tingling ran through his head.

(It-It's gone!?)

Yes, the piece in his mouth had melted and disappeared. Still, he was by no means unsatisfied. The meat had disappeared, but its strong flavor intensely stimulated his taste buds.

(Th-This is...!)

He took another mouthful. And yet another.

(I can't stop!)

It was like his body was moving on its own. His whole body was craving for more meat. Each mouthful of the tender and juicy meat felt like his mouth was stuffed, but he didn't become stuffed at all. He could still go for more. And it was emphasized by...

(This sauce!)

This sweet, yet somewhat sour sauce gave the meat a refreshing flavor, stimulating your appetite even more. He could really eat this without end. The other two were devouring it in a frenzy too.

Then the quite large piece of meat was gone in no time. All three had an entranced expression. Hiiro never expected such an effect from it.

“...Fuh, so what do you say about this meat, brat?”

Hiiro closed his eyes and immersed himself in the aftertaste. Then he opened his eyes a bit and leaked a tepid sigh.

“Well done, my servant.”

“I know, right. After all, this meat, wait, who are you calling your servant!”

“Just a joke. Don't make a fuss, you'll just ruin the mood.”

“It's your damn fault!”

“Awawah!”

Seeing their exchange, Muir was bewildered.

“Hmpf, whatever. So, brat, what's your name?”

“Name yourself first.”

“You’re really so damn self-important! Geez, I’m Arnold Ocean. An adventurer and cook!”

“A cook? I see, that explains your cooking method.”

“Yeah, I traveled all around the world for cooking recipes. Consider yourself lucky.”

“And this chibi is?”

“Hey, listen to me!”

Arnold retorted, then continued with a sigh.

“She’s Muir Castreia. I picked her up during my travels.”

“Oh, so in this world children are lying around.”

“As if! They aren’t treasure chests!”

“No?”

“Of course not! Some stuff happened in her village.”

It indicated that he didn’t want to tell more about it. Muir also cast down her eyes somewhat sorrowfully.

(Got their reasons, huh. Well, I ain’t interested anyway.) A rather pragmatic protagonist.

Chapter 14: First Comrades?

“So, what’s your name?”

“Why do I have to give you my name?”

“Huh? Come again?”

Arnold was troubled how to react to every single of Hihiro’s unforeseen replies.

“Just kidding.”

“It was a joke!? That’s so annoying!”

“I’m Hihiro Okamura. An adventurer and... bookworm.”

“What the!? The last one’s just a hobby!”

“Fufufu.”

Then Muir suddenly let out a small voice.

“Oh, Muir’s cute when laughing after all.”

Being told so, Muir blushed bashfully. Arnold made a disgustingly delighted expression as well.

“.....Are you pervert into little girls?”

“Hey, hold it! I can’t let that pass!”

“Uhh.... I’m not... a little girl.”

The two of them got angry.

“Right! She might not look like it, but she’s twelve already! She can even give birth!”

Arnold said proudly with a thumbs-up, but the little girl next to him glared at him intensely.

“D-Don’t say such embarrassing things!”

Seeing her talk angrily with her cheeks puffed up, Hihiro realized something.

“So different from before.”

He had imagined her to be a quiet child that never got angry, far away from being cheeky.

“Mh? You mean Muir? Well, duh, anyone would shrink back when a crude villainous guy with an evil look appears, not just my cute Muir.”

“Okay, sounds like you would like to taste my sword!”

Hihiro emitted a bloodlust with his glasses glittering.

“Pft! Just try! If it’s to protect Muir, I’ll even eat poop!”

“.....You fail as a human being.”

Muir was stumped with mixed feelings too.

“Pah! She’s just that important! By the way, I got a question for you, Hihiro.”

“I’m not gonna tell you a thing about my ability.”

“Grr...”

It was about that after all.

“But I never saw a magic that stretches a sword before.”

“It’s not just a sword, but a katana.”

“A katana? Now that you mention it. So that’s a katana? Looks pretty well-made.”

“No clue, but it’s easy to handle.”

“Mhm~ So regarding the—”

“I ain’t telling you anything about my magic.”

“Why! What’s the harm! I shared my meat with you!”

“That was compensation for my help. The matter is closed.”

“Ugg...”

There was nothing to be done about it.

“Anyway, I’m surprised you can chit-chat with a total stranger.”

“Mh? Well, somehow we ended up eating together after all. Besides, you don’t look like a bad guy.”

“What makes you think that? I’m human after all. I might attack that chibi-Gabranth.”

“!?”

In an instant, Muir turned pale and Arnold seized his broadsword. His expression was full of hostility. But Hihiro calmly looked at them.

“Wh-What could you be talking about?”

“Your reaction tells me more than enough.”

Arnold’s reaction proved that Hihiro had been right.

“Kuh.... How did you know?”

“....Mm.”

He pointed his finger at a certain place. It was Muir’s bottom.

“B-Bastard! You were lusting after Muir!?”

As he seemed to have a huge misunderstanding, Hihiro reluctantly spelled it out for him.

“Take a closer look. It’s moving around the whole time... her tail, that is.”

“Eh?”

This time, Muir exclaimed in surprise. She quickly checked behind her and had her breath taken away.

“H-Hey, Muir...”

Arnold had frozen up too.

“S-Sorry!”

Apparently her tail, hidden inside her clothes, had unintentionally popped out due to the delicious meal.

“The tail is a trait of the Gabranth, right? And that hat is hiding the other trait, the animal ears, right?”

The two fell silent at Hihiro’s statement. Arnold then spoke with a troubled expression.

“.....Indeed, she’s a Gabranth. But Muir... we have done nothing wrong! So don’t tell anyone!”

He looked at him earnestly. At the same time, Arnold got ready to draw his sword at any time... but that was unnecessary.

“Tell anyone? Why would I? I don’t care at all if you’re human or a beastman.”

“...Huh?”

The two had their mouths gaping wide open.

“That she’s from a different race doesn’t change the fact that she’s a living being, right?”

“Y-You...”

“To be honest, I don’t give a fuck. What’s so fun about spreading rumors?”

Hihiro too asked earnestly with a frown. Seeing that, Arnold burst out in laughter.

“Kakakakaka! You’re a funny guy, Hihiro!”

“Don’t laugh at me. I’ll stab ya.”

“No, I see now. Of course there are guys like you...”

Saying so, Arnold turned his bottom to him.

“...What’s the big idea?”

Hihiro grimaced from suddenly having an ass shoved into his face. He seriously considered stabbing him once.

“Just look.”

There, a tail appeared from above the trousers. Hihiro widened his eyes a bit.

“...You are one too.”

“Yeah. I—we are Gabranth.”

Then he heard from them that they were on their way to cross the border into the Gabranth continent. But since this was the Humas continent, it would without a doubt call forth a disaster when their true identities were found out, given the current state of affairs in the world.

People were more understanding towards them than with the Evila and didn’t kill them on the spot, but they undeniably attracted attention. Not to forget the radicals. Arnold had seen more than enough of those.

For that very reason, they had hidden their true identities and pretended to be humans.

Hihiro glanced at Arnold’s head in search for a certain something when faced with a beastman. Noticing his gaze, Arnold laughed shortly and asked.

“Wondering why I have no animal ears?”

Yes, Arnold wore no headgear. Yet no animal ears could be seen.

“Wanna know?”

“Not really.”

“I see, if you want to know that bad, I’ll tell you.”

“Didn’t you hear me?”

“Don’t be like that. Besides... it’s not completely unrelated to you.”

After these words, Arnold started talking before Hihiro could reply.

“You see... I lost them.”

“Lost them?”

Hihiro asked back by reflex.

“Yeah, because I’m a former slave.”

The slave system. It was a system mainly established for humans to persecute beastmen. Kidnapped at a young age, they got a crest called Magic Lock Crest engraved onto their bodies. The mark prevented

them from running away or rebelling by letting the magic power in their bodies react to such attempts, giving them intense pain.

Long ago, when the beastmen had no country, no status or authority, many of them were turned into slaves by humans as domestic animals.

Nowadays the slave system was abolished, but was still used behind the scenes in the form of slave markets.

Arnold was a victim to that and the human, who bought him as a slave, had his animal's ears ripped out. His ears, the pride of a beastman, had been taken away eternally just because the human had happened to be in a bad mood.

“I see now.”

It was related to Hihiro, since he was a human too. One of the Humas, who persecuted the beastmen, not just Arnold.

“One way or another, I got rid of the Magic Lock Crest and fled.”

“Can it be removed that easily?”

“Nah, no one but the master can erase it. Though it automatically disappears when the master dies.”

“Then you...”

“Yeah, I couldn't do it myself, but I had a guy that knew about how I, how we slaves, were treated, do it.”

With the death of his master, Arnold officially became free. Hearing this story, Muir too became despondent and looked saddened.

“Well, after I got my freedom, I became a traveling cook! Sparkling, ain't I?”

“The sparkling aside, you sure had a tough life. Normally it wouldn't be strange to have a trauma about humans.”

The fact that he was talking with Hihiro like this now was a mystery in itself.

“Let bygones be bygones. Not to forget, the one, who helped me, was a Humas as well.”

“I would totally go for revenge. Doing this and that...”

“Y-You're scaring me... Pooh! Anyway, I'm happy right now and that's all that matters.”

He said while petting Muir's head. She narrowed her eyes pleased.

“That reminds me, what're you doing in this area, Hihiro? A quest?”

“I have no obligation to—”

“—answer me. Yeah, yeah, enough of that. What's the harm in telling me at least that?”

Sure, there was no harm, but he had no reason to either. It was merely Arnold's curiosity. And not just his, Muir also stared at him attentively.

".....Haah. I intend to..."

The two hung on Hiirō's every word. He spoke slowly...

"...cross the border."

"...Eh? Y-You mean...?"

"Yeah, just like you two."

"Why! Why's a human like you going to the beastman continent!?"

"Huh? Obviously because I wanna see it."

"...Come again?"

"I don't give a damn about politics. I do what I want and stop at nothing, not even killing, if someone stands in my way."

".....Pft."

Arnold burst out into laughter again.

"What's so funny, pervert?"

"Hey, is that title a given now!?"

"Anyway, I'm just doing the same as you guys."

Arnold suddenly said with a serious look.

"It's not a field trip, man. The Gabranth are currently trigger-happy in more ways than one. If they spot a human, it won't end well."

"Fine by me. I'll turn the tables on them!"

"...Are you serious?"

"Naturally. I've no reason to run away."

"The beastmen are strong."

"But I'm stronger."

Since he had the Word Magic , he believed that it would work out.

"You don't say now. I'm getting more and more interested in you."

"Stop it, you're giving me shivers. I don't swing that way."

“Neither do I, damn it!”

Arnold then shouted “Can’t you take this seriously?” angrily, whereas Hihiro responded “Probably not” indifferently. Watching over their exchange, Muir once again spilled a small smile.

“Anyway, our meeting must be some kind of fate. And we’re heading in the same direction too. Wanna go together?”

“Stop messing around. What nonsense is that? I’m just fine by...”

Saying so, he suddenly made a somewhat contemplative face and fell silent, so Arnold asked him.

“Wh-What’s wrong?”

“You meant to say: Please come with us. Right?”

“Grr... I swear... this brat is...”

He glared at him while grinding his teeth, but sighed right afterward.

“Haah~ I can’t win against you with words. Fine, we’ll come with you.”

“Do want you want.”

Originally Hihiro had planned to act alone, but this was a good opportunity to learn about the beastmen. It was definitely better to have some background knowledge about his destination, the beastman continent. Therefore he permitted them to accompany him.

“Ah, before I forget.”

Suddenly Arnold glared at him with narrowed eyes.

“What?”

“Just a warning.”

“Tell me.”

“.....Don’t lay hands on Muir.”

“I’m normal, you pervert.”

“Don’t screw with me! I’m super normal, you fool!”

“Mh? That’s a first. I certainly don’t have an interest in little girls, but I was sure you had?”

“Okay, let’s take this outside, you worthless brat!”

“We’re already outside, Mr. Pedophile.”

“Don’t call me that!”

Muir wearily shrugged her shoulders on their never-ending exchange and whispered with a voice so quiet

that it couldn't be heard by anyone.

“Muh, I’m not a little girl.”

Her mutter was lost with the wind.

Chapter 15: The Heroes Hear Rumors About Him

“Aw, my shoulders are so stiff~”

The one rolling his shoulders exhausted was one of the Heroes summoned to Victorias , Aoyama Taishi. Next to him stood the other three Heroes, looking just as exhausted.

The captain of the second division of the army, Vale Kimble, stood in front of them while watching these four.

“Good job. The current quest was quite rewarding again.”

The quest had been to hunt Stinger Bats in the Droke Cave . It was put up because their population was too large and lately they started to attack the town.

Moreover, since poisonous demons were living in the Droke Cave too and footing was bad in the dark, it was given a rather high rank, namely C.

However, the four of them had a high level and superb teamwork, so they managed to hunt over a hundred Stinger Bats. That should take care of the quest, so they returned to the castle.

“The EXP from all the demons sure was worth it.”

When Taishi said that, everyone nodded in response.

“Yes and we discovered some flaws in our teamwork, so we can work on that now.”

Suzumiya Chika wiped her sweat with a towel.

“Then let us take a look at your Status now.”

They confirmed it like Vale told them.

TAISHI AOYAMA		Lv. 23	
HP:	120/406	ATK:	212 263
MP:	89/370	DEF:	195 210
		AGL:	130 137
EXP:	7200	HIT:	152 158
NEXT:	987	INT:	119 122
Magic Attributes Fire, Wind, Lightning, Light			
Magic Fireball Fire, Attack, Flame Lance Fire, Attack, Wind Cutter Wind, Attack, Cyclone Wind, Attack, Thunder Shock Lightning, Attack, Thunder Break Lightning, Attack, Lighting Light, Effect, Light Arrow Light, Attack			
Titles Hero, Other Worlder, Harem Creator, Awakened One			

CHIKA SUZUMIYA	Lv. 23
HP: 134/373 MP: 65/340 EXP: 7200 NEXT: 987	ATK: 200 250 DEF: 200 210 AGL: 140 155 HIT: 145 148 INT: 120 128
Magic Attributes Fire, Earth, Ice, Light Magic Fireball Fire, Attack, Flame Lance Fire, Attack, Grave Earth, Attack, Earthquake Earth, Attack, Ice Needle Ice, Attack, Ice Tornado Ice, Attack, Lighting Light, Effect, Light Arrow Light, Attack Titles Hero, Other Worlder, Sports Queen, Awakened One	

SHURI MINAMOTO	Lv. 23
HP: 200/310 MP: 29/530 EXP: 7200 NEXT: 987	ATK: 107 119 DEF: 110 121 AGL: 130 135 HIT: 118 120 INT: 200 215
Magic Attributes Wind, Water, Light Magic Wind Cutter Wind, Attack, Green Bind Wind, Support, Water Wall Water, Support, Bubble Shot Water, Attack, Heal Light, Recovery, Antidote Light, Recovery, Charge Light, Support Titles Hero, Other Worlder, Yamato Nadeshiko, Awakened One	

SHINOBU AKAMORI	Lv. 23
HP: 90/342 MP: 34/500 EXP: 7200 NEXT: 987	ATK: 115 127 DEF: 113 124 AGL: 165 170 HIT: 120 122 INT: 207 222
Magic Attributes Water, Lightning, Light Magic Mist Water, Support, Aqua Spiral Water, Attack, Paralyze Lightning, Effect, Acceleration Lightning, Support, Heal Light, Recovery, Cleaning (Light, Recovery/Support), Ray Light, Attack Titles Hero, Other Worlder, Curious One, Awakened One	

(All of it looks good, but I could do without the Harem Creator title.) Taishi wasn't satisfied with his own title, because he didn't have a single memory of ever creating a harem.

“What’re you spacing out for, Taishi?”

“Eh? Ah, n-nothing! Ahaha!”

He was surprised when Chika suddenly called out to him, because there was no way he could tell her about his title.

“Weirdo. Anyway, we got rather strong.”

“Yeah, our hard work paid off.”

“Yep, Shuricchi is right. We have to continue like this~”

“Yes, you are all right.”

Vale also brightened up happily.

“Still, I’m really pooped today~”

“Geez, Taishi, you’re so sloppy.”

Chika cautioned Taishi, who lay down on the ground.

“Let me for today~ Ah, reminds me, Vale, did anything strange happen lately?”

“Anything strange? Let me think…”

Vale put his hand against his chin and looked contemplative.

“Now that you mention it, some wanted men were caught in Ames the other day.”

“I think Ames is a village west of here?”

Vale affirmed Shinobu’s question with a nod.

“Yes.”

“And the caught men were rather famous, weren’t they?”

“Yes, the Harios Brothers. They are notorious adventurers that murdered and thieved. Though they were stripped off their adventurer titles when their crimes became known. So it is more correct to call them former adventurers.”

“Mhm, these guys were caught?”

“Indeed and the testimony of the villagers is rather garbled.”

“What do you mean?”

Everyone, not just Shinobu, curiously paid attention to Vale.

“Every villager is saying that a Hero clad in a red robe came to their rescue when the Harios Brothers preyed on the village.”

“A red robe? A hero? What the?”

“All I know is that he had black hair, used a magic that extended his sword and had a power to make his opponent faint just from a touch.”

“Black hair... couldn’t be?”

“Th-The report also mentioned he had a self-important attitude.”

“Black hair and self-important?”

Shinobu looked at everyone’s faces and apparently everyone was reminded of the same person. But they all believed it to be some kind of mistake.

“Nah... not him. He said himself that he’s just an average person after all.”

“He would never help anyone with that twisted personality of his.”

“Haha, that’s going too far, Chika.”

“Mh~ But, I wonder what’s true. Actually, where’s he now anyway?”

No one knew the answer to that. Vale shook his head too.

“Well, thinking won’t get us anywhere. We’ll just do what we can!”

Chika declared to encourage to everyone. Everyone responded with a nod.

Hihiro’s party arrived at Surge, the town near the border, but an unforeseen situation took place there.

“Hey, what’s the meaning of this?”

“N-No idea...”

Hihiro frowned sullenly, whereas Arnold next to him twitched his cheek muscles.

A large number of people had set up stalls and attracted a crowd in front of them. Hihiro, not a fan of crowds, got irritated by this confluence and thereby resulting enthralled atmosphere.

“M-Maybe a festival?”

Muir inclined her lovely head and her eyes were sparkling. The endless line of stores might have fascinated her.

“Wait, isn’t today the first day of Urui?”

“Indeed, Oji-san.”

By the way, ‘Urui’ referred to the month name.

January: Nalwine

February: Nunui

March: Guveron

April: Guviris

May: Losron

June: Norui

July: Kelves

August: Urui

September: Ivanness

October: Nalbress

November: Hisui

December: Grison

These were the months of this world with twenty-eight days each. Incidentally, the year was called ‘Anol’, currently it was ‘214 Anno Anol’.

“What’s so special about today?”

“You don’t know, Hihiro? The Raer Festival is held annually today.”

“ Raer Festival ?”

This world had seasons as well.

Spring: Esuil

Summer: Raer

Autumn: Jarvas

Winter: Riu

“It’s Raer right now. To blow off this heat, they’re holding stuff like this here and there.”

(I see. Just a simple summer festival.) His discomfort only grew from realizing that. It was already hot to begin with, there was this obnoxious guy next to him and this crowd on top of that only added oil to the fire. It was really irritating.

“Hey, were you thinking something rude just now?”

“Me? Nah. I only thought you were annoying, old man.”

“Listen here! Can’t you deny it, even if you have to lie? What are you answering honestly for, damn it!”

“That’s what’s so annoying about you.”

“S-Seriously, one of these days...”

He clenched his trembling fist. At that time, Arnold’s vision fell onto Muir. Her face was flushed as she

watched the bustling people.

“...Okay, I’ve decided! Say what you want, but I’m determined!”

“What’s that out of the blue? You finally lost it?”

“Shut up!”

Muir blinked her eyes in puzzlement too.

“We’re staying the night here, right? Then let’s enjoy the festival too!”

At these words, Muir’s expression lit up with energy. She seemed rather delighted. Actually, she wanted to go around the festival, but was fretting as she couldn’t say it out loud.

“I see. Then have a good time, you two. I’ll be at the inn.”

“Wait.”

Hiiro tried to leave, but was stopped at the shoulder.

“Let go.”

“No, no, how can you be like this now? Let’s enjoy the festival.”

“Not interested.”

“Mhm, you sure you want to act like that?”

“.....What do you mean?”

Arnold put up one finger and smirked. Hiiro felt like knocking him down for that, but resisted.

“Listen, the Raer Festival here in Surge is quite big.”

“.....”

“There are tons of shops~ Moreover, there’s a super popular stall here.”

Hiiro’s shoulders twitched as the words super popular piqued his interest.

“To add to that, they’re holding a competition to see which is the most popular stall in Surge. A food stall wins every year... but see what I’m getting at?”

“.....Certainly. It serves really good food?”

“I think you would be quite pleased.”

“Mhm.”

Arnold was well versed. Seemingly it wasn’t his first time at the festival in Surge. It didn’t seem like he was lying either, nor had he any reason to. Then came the bait in the form of good food.

As a result, Hihiro went ahead of the two.

“H-Hey.”

Arnold was disappointed, thinking his persuasion had failed, but Hihiro said without turning around.

“Lead the way already. What if the good stuff sells out, pervert?”

“Don’t call me a pervert!”

He shouted angrily, but his mouth formed a small smile. Muir was thrilled from anticipation too. The three of them settled on enjoying the festival for a while.

Chapter 16: Raer Festival

“... Burning Peach Candy ?”

Hiiro muttered while looking at the sign of a store.

“Oh, they’re selling quite the rare fruit!”

“Hello, please come closer!”

The stall owner, an energetic old man was radiating with courtesy. Muir looked at the Burning Peach Candy displayed at the stall with sparkling eyes.

“Old man, give us three!”

“Sure thing! Ohh, the little missy’s cute, so I’ll give you an extra big one!”

“Th-Thanks... Ehehe.”

Muir spilled out a happy smile.

“Is it good?”

“Yeah, you bet~ The fruit is shaped like a burning flame and while it’s candy, it’s soft enough to masticate it. Well, you’ll understand how burning it is once you try it.”

Being told so, Hiiro ate a mouthful. He certainly could bite it off easily and its taste spread in his mouth while he chewed it. Then suddenly something popped inside his mouth.

“Mh?”

“Hehe, surprised? The prickling on the tongue is the secret of the Burning Peach !”

This flavor was addicting for sure. It was damn sweet, yet a treat for your taste buds. This was surely popular with the kids. Muir too was holding her cheek with an entranced expression.

“Okay! Onto the next one!”

Arnold took the lead and the other two followed him.

(So this is a festival. If it has good food, it isn’t all that bad.) Hiiro never went to a festival back in Japan, so he was quite drawn to this new experience. Though it was typical for him to wish that this crowd wasn’t here.

A lot of stalls were similar to the ones in Japan, like a shooting range or drawn lots. Muir was enjoying it to the fullest, but after walking around for a while, Hiiro’s mentality finally started to reach its limit.

(Aw, this sucks. People bump into me and step on my feet... Can't they all disappear?) His thoughts started to wander into dangerous waters. Then he spotted a rather large stall. The sign of the stall read the following: Happiness Shark Sandwich

Arnold, looking at the same sign, showed a surprised expression.

“N-No way... THAT Happiness Shark?”

“You know of it?”

“Yeah, of course! It's an ingredient each cook would like to prepare at least once!”

Hiiro presumed that it must be something really good from his excited attitude.

“Listen, the Happiness Shark only lives in the Great Bull Sea. Moreover, only at its deepest part, so it rarely comes up to the surface. It's like super rare, but it appears for a short while for laying eggs. Its body has a beautiful pink color and a jade-green horn on its head. It's said that every single part of its body, be it the horn or fangs, can be eaten!”

Arnold spoke with passion, but Hiiro basically had no interest in animals, so it went in one ear and out the other.

“So, is it good?”

“Of course! Listen, its taste is said... to top even the Aqua Hound Meat!”

“Buy it. Now.”

In an instant, Hiiro's look changed to something close to killing intent.

“S-Sure.. b-but.”

“What?”

“Look there.”

“Mh?”

Arnold pointed at a cylinder lottery like you often saw at shopping districts.

“They have a limited stock... so you have to win that to eat it.”

“Say... what!?”

A shiver run all over his body. Coming all the way here and not getting to eat this delicious food? Hiiro bit his lips at this torture.

“Each person has one try and it looks like several won already... Oh, the plate says they only have six portions left... The line's pretty long too, so I guess it's no good.”

Hiiro clenched his fist frustrated as he saw Arnold throwing in the towel.

(Wait, wait. That Aqua Hound Meat was awesome. But I can't eat the food in front of my eyes that's even better? How's that possible... No, the word giving up isn't in my dictionary.) Hihiro raised his face with a jerk and glared at the stall.

“Let me give you my thanks, old man.”

“Huh?”

“My thanks for showing me this.”

“Gladly, but you can't eat it...”

“No, there's no reason to give up.”

He looked at the people spinning the cylinder lottery. Apparently you won when a golden ball dropped out.

(In that case...)

He concentrated magic power in his finger tip.

“Show me your hands, you two.”

““...Eh?””

The other two looked at him blankly.

The line in front of the lottery slowly became shorter. With some winning, there were only three portions left at last.

But fortunately, no one else won since then. And then finally...

“My turn.”

Hihiro had his chance. He gulped and slowly spun the cylinder. It clattered and then...

....*PLOP*

Everyone swallowed their saliva. The ball that dropped out was...

“FUAHAHAHA! Nothing is impossible for me!”

Hiiro burst out in laughter in an exaggerated manner. Yes, he perfectly got a golden ball. And a pale glowing word was written in his fist that was raised high into the air. It said... Good luck .

He had been worried over what to write. The word Luck could’ve worked as well, but he wasn’t sure if his luck would increase or decrease through it. What about ‘Come out’ then? A ball would have dropped out for sure, but not necessarily a golden one.

Therefore he had written Good luck , since he could easily imagine becoming lucky through it. Magic meant imagination. Any unnecessary thoughts would reduce its power. So he chose the easy to imagine word Good luck . His magic was really like a cheat.

Moreover, it was a triple package. He had written the same word for the other two, because that increased the chance of one of them winning even more.

Still, it meant exposing his magic to them.

(Well, I regret nothing. It’s for the food anyway.) His appetite won over the troubles of having it exposed. As a result, all three of them won in a row. Of course the other two had their mouths gaping wide open at this scene, but Hiiro considered explaining it to them as he was in a really good mood.

“H-Hey, Hiiro...?”

“I know what you want to ask, but for now... eat!”

In his hands was a dish like a hamburger. The filling was the Happiness Shark of course. It had a light pink color and was wrapped in some vegetables like lettuce with a salty-sweet sauce.

“*MUNCH*.... Ohh!?”

Where am I? For a moment, he felt like he was inside the sea with the pressure of the deep sea squeezing his body. Such a rich flavor. The compatibility with the bread was extraordinary and just a single bite let him feel the soul of the ocean.

His body melted away from the stimulation on his tongue, no, inside his whole mouth. Furthermore, he tasted something crunchy. It was the horn that Arnold mentioned before.

Delicious. The fried gristle with excellent seasoning was indescribably delicious, too. His body readily ingested everything, even the bones and fangs.

(Holy cow. Who knew something so delicious existed!) It was more delicious than any fish he had eaten before. The inside of his stomach was frolicking as if the food was still alive. It was earth-shatteringly good. Moreover, his body felt like it was brimming with power.

Wow... Just wow...

(Definitely... a win...)

His cheeks naturally slackened. He might fall asleep on the spot from the rapture if he were to relax. It was a really pleasant sensation, like he was leisurely swimming in the sea under the warm sun.

When he looked at the other two, Muir was relishing the food too. She seemed to like eating as well, so she was in a good mood from getting to eat something so good. As for Arnold... He was crying for some reason.

To be honest, it was not a pleasant sight to see an old man crying over food. Well, the food was certainly worth crying over, but it somewhat spoiled the mood, so Hihiro decided to smack him afterwards.

“Oh~ I’m stuffed! Stuffed to no end~”

Arnold smiled happily.

“Yeah, it was delicious. Ehm... well...”

Muir looked at Hihiro.

“Uhm... Th-Thank you.”

Seemingly she had wanted to express her gratitude. Hihiro replied with a simple “No prob”, but this triggered Arnold to ask about the Word Magic .

“So, will you tell me about what you wrote on my palm earlier?”

“.....Fine.”

“Eh? You’ll really tell me?”

Arnold had thought he would refuse again, so he asked back on reflex.

“What? I can just keep it to myself then.”

“Ah, no, no. Let me hear it! That word... is that your magic?”

“Yes, it’s called Word Magic . A unique magic.”

“A unique magic!?”

“You’re too loud! I won’t tell you anymore!”

“S-Sorry. B-But is it really a unique magic?”

“Yeah. See the word on your palm?”

“Y-Yes.”

“That’s a word from where I lived and I can draw out the effect from the word.”

This world didn't know of Kanji, so the other two couldn't read it, so he frankly explained the magic. Both of them listened with a dumbfounded expression.

“Actually, isn't your magic unfair?”

Nod

Muir nodded supporting Arnold's words.

“Who cares. It's like an inborn talent.”

“Well, sure, but... Still, I've heard of unique magic, but none as powerful as this.”

“Oho, like what for example?”

Hihiro was interested in unique magic besides his own.

“Let's see, magic that controls space, magic that brainwashes people and... magic that manipulates other magic.”

“They indeed sound powerful.”

Especially the brainwashing one sounded dangerous. He didn't know how it worked, but a magic that bewitches other people's hearts was too powerful.

“But with your Word Magic, you can use any of these magic I just mentioned too, right?”

To be honest, he could. Maybe he couldn't control it as perfect as the original, but it was possible to use a word with a similar effect.

“Indeed, I can.”

“I knew it, so unfair~ You're a damn cheater~”

Nod

“It might be omnipotent, but it's not invincible.”

“What do you mean?”

“Who knows? I've no reason to tell you.”

“Grr... Well, you aren't a fool that would tell others your weakness.”

“Indeed.”

“But leaving that aside, your magic's still too fascinating! Truly fantastical!”

“Whatever. I'm tired, so I'm going to the inn. Also, don't tell anyone about this.”

“Listen to me!”

Hihiro acted at his own pace as always, whereas the other two sighed and followed him.

“Mh? Enough of the festival already?”

“Eh? Ah, yeah, I’m satisfied...”

“I had fun too!”

“There you have it.”

“Then go book a room, servant.”

“I’m repeating myself, but I ain’t your servant! Also, pay some respect to your elders!”

“Don’t be so arrogant just because you were born earlier.”

“It let me experience more of life! Apologize! Apologize to me right away!”

Hihiro looked at the suddenly shouting Arnold and said.

“.....Don’t become like him, Chibi.”

“What do you mean, you damn brat!”

Hihiro shifted his gaze to Muir, but she was troubled how to react.

Ignoring Arnold’s annoying outburst, Hihiro headed to the inn. But a problem occurred there.

“....Eh? No free rooms?”

Arnold had his mouth gaping wide open at the front desk. Behind him, Hihiro was emitting a displeased aura to the max.

“My deepest apologizes. Due to the festival, we have no vacant rooms at the moment.”

What to do now? Arnold sweated bullets, wondering how to reason with the devil behind him that glared at him with killing intent.

Arnold slowly and quietly turned his head around and looked at the black-haired boy in question.

“What’s the deal, old man?”

“N-Nothing I can do here, can I? When they’re booked, they’re booked.”

“....Hah, sleeping outside even though we’re at a town...”

Hihiro muttering so with empty eyes was a rare sight. To be honest, he had hoped to sleep in a proper bed after camping outside for so long, but sadly enough, it was an unfulfilled dream.

“Damn... Stupid festival... Just explode.”

He said something dreadful, but he had enjoyed the festival himself, so he didn’t snap for real. They should’ve booked a room beforehand. No, even then, the rooms might have been booked out already, but he regretted not checking it.

“Excuse me...”

The inn keeper at the front desk called out to them, so the three of them looked at him dispirited.

“If I may suggest, why don’t you try out the Guild?”

“The Guild?”

Arnold titled his head.

“Ah, yes. The Guild has resting rooms for their staff, but if you talk to them, they might give you a room?”

Upon hearing that, Arnold’s expression brightened up and he nodded.

“I see. On a day like this, they really might give us a room.”

“Are we going there?”

Muir looked at him with an upturned gaze and Arnold placed his hand on her head.

“Yeah, it’s our last hope.”

“I hope it won’t be in vain.”

“Brat! Why’re you saying that! Don’t be so damn negative!”

“Let’s hurry.”

“Again, listen to me!”

Hihiro swiftly left the inn, whereas the other two followed in a rush.

Chapter 17: Guild Master

The Guild housed quite a few people, but some way or another, they had a room for the three to sleep in. The party was relieved that their trip wasn't in vain.

They were taken to a rest room and laid down on the beds. It definitely was better than sleeping outside.

“By the way, what are you going to do from now on?”

Arnold asked, whereupon Hiiro answered while closing his eyes.

“...It would be bad to just slip by the checkpoint, right?”

“Yeah, unless you have an official Visa .”

“Do you?”

“Yeah, for Muir and me.”

“How did you get it?”

“Wait, you don't even know that? How did you want to cross the border?”

“Talk my way through and if that doesn't work... through force.”

“Scary! Normally I would laugh at your stupidity, but now that I know of your magic, it only sounds scary!”

Arnold feared that he would cross the border by beating the clerks with his Word Magic , because his power was more than able to.

“Listen, the Visa is issued at the Guild. Look.”

Saying so, he showed him a piece of paper slightly bigger than a train ticket. Written on it were the issued and expiration date.

“Then I can just get one here...”

“No, even if you apply for one here, it takes quite some time until it's approved, you know?”

“...Seriously?”

“Seriously. Usually you get it from the Guild in the capital of the country. And even then, it takes around one week. In your case, you apply for it here, then the Guild in the capital verifies it and you only get your Visa once they approve.”

First you applied for it, then your personal history and origins were investigated. Needless to say, you

wouldn't get an approval when you had a criminal record. But if there were no problems and a valid reason for crossing the border, the Guild Master gave his approval on the permit. That was the Visa .

“Oho, so the Guild Master in the capital is quite the big shot?”

“Come again? You were in the capital, right? How come you don't know?”

“I had no interest.”

“.....Hah. Listen and remember this well, Hihiro. Do you know how many SSS-rank adventurers are amongst the humans?”

“Three, I think?”

“Yeah and one of them is the Guild Master in the capital.”

“Mm.”

“Don't give me a 'Mm'!”

That was Hihiro's only reaction, since he had no interest in other people.

“He's amazing, you know? Only people with superior strength and popularity are chosen for the position. They even say his physical ability is equal to a beastman. Truly a monster.”

“I understand that this monster is lost in his status and prestige.”

“H-Hey... It's certainly said that the Guild Master has an equal power to the King in emergencies, but... aren't you going too far?”

“Dun care.”

“....Haah. Anyway, his name is...”

“Mh? Oh, it's been a while, Vale!”

“It has indeed been a while, Judom-sama.”

The man that greeted Vale, the captain of the second division of the Victorias army, with a generous smile was Judom Lankars.

He wore a splendid white beard, but was only in his late 40s. His shortly trimmed white hair was from other reasons than from old age.

His gentle expression gave off an aura that put even children at ease. But his abnormal figure became

obvious when standing.

The height of his body was over two meters and his trained arms looked as hard and robust as steel.

His whole body was so muscular that you would think his clothes would rip at the slightest movement.

“Fuhaha. Stop with the -sama. You’re a prominent captain yourself now!”

He clapped Vale on his back while laughing open-heartedly. But even though it should’ve been a light pat, it felt like a strike that gradually cut down his HP to Vale.

“*Cough* I-I see that you have not changed, Judom-sama.”

Vale showed a happy smile while rubbing his back.

“So, what’s up? It’s rare for you to come here.”

“I came here to ask a favor of you, the Guild Master.”

Currently they were inside the Guild, in the room of the Guild Master.

“Oho, something troublesome again? Forget it, I’m retired. Leave the front lines to the youngsters.”

“What are you talking about!? Even now, no one is able to hold a candle to you as an adventurer!”

“Fuhaha! You’re giving me too much credit! Besides, I heard that the Heroes were summoned. ...It’s their era now, right?”

Judom asked with a slightly sharp gaze, but Vale didn’t notice it.

“No, no, a strong person is always in demand. Especially someone as strong as you.”

Hearing Vale’s answer, Judom clouded his expression a bit, but brightened up again right away.

“And I tell you, my era is over. As I am right now, I am only a close match for an SS rank. I can’t move around like in my SSS-rank days anymore.”

Judom said so with a kind of self-deprecation with an insightful expression.

“You are being too modest. ...Just now you said to leave the front lines to the youngsters.”

“Yeah, I did.”

“I would like to ask you to train these youngsters for battle.”

“.....The Heroes?”

“Yes.”

For a while, the two gazed at each other. Judom looked at Vale, who confronted him with an earnest look, and laughed faintly.

“The same look as back then, when you asked to become my disciple.”

“Although you turned me down in the end. Back then you said to me: You’re not good enough to be my disciple. I only take in someone that can fight on the same level as me.”

“Did I really say that?”

Judom smiled, reminiscing about his naivety.

“And now people, who can fight on your level, have appeared.”

“.....Is that so.”

Wiping off his smile, he answered Vale.

“Please teach them! It is for the sake of the future of us Humas!”

“For the future of Humas, huh...”

Vale looked at him with determined, straightforward eyes. Judom took out his pipe and lighted it. Then he slowly blew out some smoke.

“Hey, Vale.”

“Yes?”

“Do you know why I became the Guild Master?”

“That’s... No, I do not.”

“Because the Guild Master can give commands with the same authority as the King in emergencies.”

“Judom-sama...?”

“When I was an adventurer, I always wondered why this country, no, this continent keeps waging war.”

“ ... ”

“Every day I prayed that someone would bring peace to the world. Salvation by faith, so to speak. But the dispute between races escalated and spread to this country too. Of course I took up arms, because there were things I wanted to protect. But what do you think the then Guild Master did at that time?”

“ ”

As he knew the answer, Vale looked shameful.

“The Guild Master went far away. He abandoned the country. Abusing his authority as a Guild Master, he escaped for his own good. Due to that, the command chain of the adventurers broke down and many lives that could’ve been saved were lost.”

“Judom-sama...”

“The King had appointed that Guild Master.”

Vale kept silent at his words. The King had been responsible for appointing that Guild Master. Judom was

angry at himself too for not being able to see his true character.

“So I desperately grew stronger and aimed to be the Guild Master. Then I asked the King for authority to command during emergencies. And thus the Guild Master became another King for the county.”

“...”

“I aimed for the one and only position that could correct the King’s mistakes. That was the best I could do as an adventurer. But...”

Judom clenched his fist with frustration. Vale widened his eyes from seeing this. Even now, the King’s orders were absolute. But the Guild Master had the right to decide about all emergencies regarding adventurers.

Judom gave Vale a quiet and cold look.

“The King then committed another mistake.”

“Wha! How can you say that!”

Vale was shocked about the sudden criticism of the King. Going any further would be defamation.

“The Kind sacrificed three people for what? Wait, one’s still barely alive, I guess.”

Then he threw a glance at Vale, pressing him to answer.

“Th-That’s...”

“The Hero Summoning... Sure, our country is in danger. But I advised the King that there were other things to do before summoning Heroes.”

“You did such a thing...?”

Vale didn’t know that, so he frowned at him.

“Why did we reject the peace treaty?”

“Peace... treaty? What are you talking about?”

“Mhm, I guess you weren’t informed. Well, naturally.”

Judom shook his head wearily.

“Ex-Explain yourself, Judom-sama!”

“A few years ago, there should have been a peace treaty from the Evila.”

“Impossible! I never heard of such a thing!”

“The top brass must have swept it under the carpet.”

While blowing out some smoke, Judom said so.

“B-But still! Even if such a letter came from the Evila, we cannot trust it!”

“Why didn’t we seek a dialogue?”

“...”

“You don’t know the outcome unless you try it.”

“That’s...”

Vale understood very well that it was a sound argument, so he couldn’t object.

“I know how you feel. I also know how they betrayed us on previous meetings initiated through letters. But there should be other methods before sacrificing your own daughters, no?”

“H-His Majesty was grieving about that as well.”

“One does not simply grieve over your daughters’ deaths!”

His earlier gentle expression changed completely, turning into a dreadfully intensive one. Vale broke into sweat all over his whole body. That was the spirit of an retired adventurer...

Judom sighed while shaking his head.

“Either way, if he had just consulted me, I would have come along to wherever the meeting would have been. You, like many others, may not know, but there are good guys amongst the Gabranth and Evila too.”

“Th-That certainly is true, but it’s likewise a fact that the Evila king tries to destroy us Humas.”

“A fact?”

“Yes!”

“Then do you know about this? The Evila King has changed.”

“...Eh?”

“When a King changes, so does the policy. The letter was sent by the new King as well. Nevertheless, the King ignored my advice and called strangers from another world.”

“Calling them strangers... For our sake, the Heroes are—”

“—risking their lives...?”

“...”

“I don’t know what world they came from, but I don’t think they care enough about our world to risk their lives for it. If I were in their shoes and suddenly brought here against my will, I would leave everything behind and go on a trip.”

That was exactly what Hihiro did, but Vale was shocked from Judom’s words and froze up.

“B-But the Heroes seriously are...”

“They just haven’t faced a life-or-death situation. Not many recover after tasting despair.”

“.....”

“They’ve a home too, right? As the one who called them here, the King has to make sure they are returned alive... doesn’t he?”

Vale looked downward and closed his eyes.

“From what I heard, another guy was summoned, but he left as he had no reason to comply?”

“Ah, yes.”

“I can trust that guy more than the Heroes.”

“Wh-What do you mean!?”

“That you don’t understand it shows how inexperienced you still are, Vale.”

“Judom-sama...”

Then Judom showed a gentle expression again, placing his pipe on the desk.

“We’re done here, Vale.”

“B-But!”

“Think it over once more about what you have to do. It’s your turn to advise the King now.”

“I could never...”

“How can someone save the world, when the advice from friends or retainers goes unheeded?”

After that Judom didn’t say another word and Vale left the room astonished.

Chapter 18: A Method to Pass the Check Point

“Judom Lankars?”

“Yeah, Judom Lankars. A former adventurer that was well known as the Impact King .”

Apparently it was a nickname, but Hihiro frowned upon hearing it.

“That name sounds like a delusional middle schooler came up with it...”

“Middle schooler?”

“Forget it.”

“Okay? Anyway, remember his name. It’s such a waste that he’s a Humas.”

“Oho, wouldn’t expect that from someone who’s lost in status and prestige.”

“I keep telling you, he isn’t like that! He took care of me once too, albeit a long time ago.”

Arnold narrowed his eyes reminiscing.

“Well, I couldn’t care less about that guy, but at this rate, I won’t be able to pass the check point, right?”

“Yeah, it takes quite some time to pass through there.”

Hihiro pondered about what to do with a pensive face. It seemed it would work out with time, but it already took one week in the capital, so it would take even longer here. He definitely wasn’t patient enough for that.

“Hey.”

“Mh?”

“The check point is in front of a large bridge, right?”

“Yeah, that bridge is the only connection between the human and beastman continent. Well, it isn’t impossible to cross over the sea, but...”

“But it’s no good? I thought about taking that route if all else fails.”

“And how? The sea between the continent has a really rough current and sometimes even whirlpools. Not to mention the ferocious demons. I heard it’s all due the particular terrain, so I guess crossing by boat is impossible.”

(I can’t pass it normally, since I don’t have a Visa . That said, passing over the sea is out of the question, too. Wait, if I use my Word Magic ... No, it’s quite likely someone will see me. Ah, right, I

can just copy the Visa with the word Copy ...But that's so ordinary and no fun. Reminds me, I haven't tried that experiment yet. Good timing. If the left is no good, try from the right, or so they say. Kukuku....) Hiiro smirked as he thought of something. But the other two were astonished seeing him like that, thinking that he was up to no good again.

On the next day, they went up to a hill near the check point.

“Hey, are you really going to do it?”

Arnold looked doubtful, which pissed Hiiro off.

“Just do what I told you.”

Muir looked at them restlessly.

“Okay, let's get started.”

Hiiro said so, then wrote *Lightweight* on his chest with magic power. He had trouble writing like this, but he didn't use *Air Writing* as the costs were too high. After that he activated it and counted until forty in his head.

“All set.”

“Okay. Ohh, you're really light!”

Going by Hiiro's stature, he would be around sixty kilos without a doubt, but right now he weighted no more than a few kilos. Arnold lifted him up like a spear.

“Y-You really sure about this?”

“Hurry up already. I told you it only lasts for one minute, so I only got twenty seconds left now!”

“Fine!”

Arnold mustered all his strength and then...

“WRAAAAAR!”

he threw Hiiro into the sky with all his might.

WHOOOOOOOSH!

“Uh!”

Hiiro squinted from the incredible air pressure and took off from the ground with a lot of speed, feeling

like a cannon ball.

(Oh~ Nice view from here.)

He admired the wonderful scenery in his heart. Then the effect from `Lightweight` vanished and he slowly lost momentum. As he was about to stop in midair, he wrote a word into the air.

This time it was `Fly`. He aimed at his back and activated it, because he imagined flying freely like an animal with wings like that.

Of course he had previously checked that he was able to fly by writing it on his palm. Directing it at his back was mostly whimsical.

(Mhm, wings... Maybe I should try if I can grow some next time.) He got a bit excited from having found a new challenge. This part of him showed how much of a kid he still was. Then the effect from `Fly` manifested.

(Ohh~ I'm flying~ But kinda slow. I'm as fast as while walking, I think?) He imagined himself flying faster, but his speed didn't change. Well, it didn't interfere with his plan, so it was alright.

Slowly raising up even higher into the sky, he flew diagonally over the check point. At this height, he only looked like a small bird to those on the ground.

But then the one minute passed and the effect ended. He wanted to write `Fly` again, but couldn't.

(Seems I can't write it twice in a row after all.)

Writing the same word in succession was impossible. He had checked upon that previously too, so he didn't panic.

(Then I'll go with this next!)

He wrote the word `Float`. Upon that, he stopped descending and came to a halt in midair. Floating in the middle of the air was a rather strange feeling.

“Mhm, how many have seen the world from so high up?”

From above, `Edea` looked beautiful. He could see green lands, blue seas and high mountains. A sight that truly made you aware of Mother Nature.

(Now I'll just repeat writing `Fly` and `Float`.)

With that in mind, he enjoyed the view while he waited for the effect from `Float` to vanish.

Meanwhile, Arnold and Muir were at the check point.

“H-Hey, Oji-san, will Hihiro-san be alright?”

“No idea. But I’ve never seen someone as reckless as him.”

Hihiro had explained to them the plan yesterday in the following way: First he reduces his own weight by writing the word `Lightweight`. Then he lets about thirty seconds pass.

As for the reason for this pause, apparently he could only activate the next word when one minute passed after a word with a temporary effect. At worst, he could end up crashring into the ground during the one minute he was being thrown.

Therefore he had Arnold throw him after forty seconds. The remaining twenty seconds would pass while he was still in an upwards movement. Still, it was only feasible since Arnold possessed quite the strength as a Gabranth.

As the next step, he would fly through the air by using the word `Fly`. Of course they asked why he didn’t use that from the beginning, but he couldn’t use the same word in succession and there was a high chance he would be spotted by someone as his momentum would be slow then.

Of course there was also a chance of him getting spotted as Arnold threw him, but one would surely think that his eyes were playing a prank as Hihiro took off with quite the speed.

The last step of the plan involved using `Fly` and `Float` alternatively and looking for an isolated place to land.

They had asked him if there wasn’t a simpler method by using words and Hihiro had checked upon that as well. He found a way to copy the `Visa` by using the word `Copy`.

However, Hihiro had always wanted to try out flying like this and since this was a good opportunity, he went through with it.

“Seriously, I don’t know if he’s a genius or just stupid.”

“Ahaha...”

“Either way, he’s a brat.”

Arnold could only let out a feigned laughter at this point. Still, it puzzled him how he was convinced that Hihiro would pull it off without problems.

The check point was a huge dome out of metal. Before going in there, an officer confirmed the `Visa` one by one.

“Okay, you may go on.”

Being told so, Muir entered first, followed by Arnold right afterwards.

The dome was filled with shops. Some were makeshift from peddlers, others were permanently located there. When they proceeded further in, there was a door, big enough to let one adult through, guarded by

two male officers on the left and right.

(Strict as always. All that effort to check those who want to pass.) While thinking so, he headed towards the officers together with Muir.

A magic circle was drawn right in front of the officers. The circle lighted up blue when a Humas stood on it, green for a Gabranth, red for Evila and yellow for everyone else.

Discrimination against the Pheom? That thought crossed his mind, but no one of that race ever passed through a check point up till now. To begin with, they rarely showed themselves. It's said that no Humas ever even saw one.

Therefore the Pheom were grouped together with everyone else.

“Going home, I see. You're clear to pass!”

Upon the officer's words, Arnold and Muir took the door outside, setting foot onto their own continent.

“Uwa~ Such a long bridge~”

Just like Muir had said, a bridge long enough to be called magnificent spanned in front of their eyes. It was approximately ten kilometers long, so her surprise was understandable.

“Let's go, Muir.”

“Yeah.”

“But I wonder where he ended up at.”

“Yeah, me too~”

Of course they meant Hiirō. He wasn't in sight, so they speculated that he was at the end of the bridge and started walking ahead.

Chapter 19: Encounter – A Unique Monster

At that time, just as the other two had suspected, Hihiro was on top of a nearby hill. From it, he could view the bridge without being discovered.

In truth, he had been forced to land on top of the bridge. Going at his slow pace, it cost way too much mana to get all the way to the other side.

There were a number of people on the bridge when he landed. Hihiro was forced to cover his entire body in his red robe to conceal his identity, and run for cover. However the Beastmen on the bridge just thought that he was a flying demon swooping down hunting for food, so they paid him no mind.

(This bridge is way too long. Just how far does it run...) Unlike in games, if you get too tired your HP will drop. So while running long distances, it will drop quite a bit. However, it also recovers slowly if you rest.

The Beastman continent was covered in green.

The main difference between this one and the Human one was the amount of untamed wildlife. Of course, the human continent was also home to quite a bit of vegetation and mountainous environments as well.

However, here in the soil and the forests; in the lakes and rivers, the surrounding wildlife had much more energy.

(So each continent has its own merits.)

The main selling point of the human continent was its human-made ecosystem. Manufacturing and trading; import and export. It was a land of business.

(I wonder what the Evila⁴ continent has... I guess I'll have to see it with my own eyes sooner or later.) As I think this, a carriage stops in front of me. From it comes a man who seems to be a peddler. Of course, he's a beastman.

(This is bad... I can't be found out here.)

Arnold said that unlike the human continent, this was a land where you could be randomly assaulted out of the blue. A war-ridden country. There's a possibility of being attacked just because of one being from the Human race.

If that happens I don't plan on losing, but I can't cause a commotion here. I don't want to get separated from Arnold when I can still get more information out of him.

(...I just thought of something.)

I write a character on my body, while thinking of something a certain person had.

“What are you doing here? Do you need a ride?”

In response to the man’s frank questions, Hiiro takes off his hood.

“Oh, you have some splendid ears there!”

The man smiles happily.

“I apologize. My companions should be here soon. Thanks for the concern, but don’t mind me.”

“Oh? I see. I wish you safe travels.”

And the man returns to his carriage.

(I somehow got through it. But that beastman was quite amiable.) I touch the ears that had sprung up on my head. They’re quite soft to the touch. But the ears weren’t the only thing that changed. Hiiro’s hair had changed to a silver color. It was the same color as Muir’s.

Using his Word Magic and holding an image of Muir’s race in mind, Hiiro had written Copy on his body. However if he had been thinking of Muir herself then his facial structure would have been greatly altered and it would have been hard to balance, so he tried to imagine something else. However he had only ever met two Beastmen in his life.

Hiiro’s psyche would not be able to handle turning into an old man like Arnold, so he stuck with thinking of Muir’s race.

And here marked the birth of a silver-haired, bespectacled boy. The words only changed the basic qualities of its target, so the effects remained over time. Hiiro would have to write Return to turn back.

(It’s weird having a tail. My body feels oddly light, and my canines have gotten strangely strong.) After waiting for a while, the other two finally got here. They were able to locate me by my red robe. But then...

“What’s with that haaaaaaiiir!”

I had expected this to happen. Even Muir lets out a sound.

“Now then, let’s depart.”

“Oi, wait, wait, wait! Why the hell are you acting like nothing’s off!? There are many things I’d like to retort at right now! ”

“As always, you’re being quite fussy. Just be quiet for a bit, like that chibi over there.”

“Muir is in too much shock to speak! Just explain yourself! Why is your hair the same color as my beloved Muir’s!?”

And so I began explaining against my will. Muir stares at me in excitement. She touches her own hair and stares at my ears.

“For you to be able to do something like that.... How broken are you?”

“Koku koku.”

I’m already bored with dealing with these two. I let out a yawn. I had set out early today so there would be few people to witness me, so I want to sleep.

“Well, it’s not like I’m the real thing. Only my form has changed.”

“Hm? So your physical abilities are still human?”

“Pretty much.”

“I see, but still, your magic is quite amazing.”

The two seem to have seen Word Magic’s true usefulness. They let out sighs.

“Anyways, where will we be heading from here?”

As Hihiro asks, Arnold points his finger.

“If we head due west from here, we should find the village of Doggam.”

“What sort of place is that?”

“It’s a town of the Bearnt ⁵ clan.”

(Bearnt . I read about them in an encyclopedia. Apparently they’re quite a peaceful race, unlike bears.) In the human capital, I tried to gather knowledge by reading the books stored at the guild.

“Well, the Bearnt are gentle folk, I don’t think you’ll be attacked even if you’re found out.”

So the information I attained was correct.

“Also the honey they produce is said to be quite a delicacy.”

“Ho? I’ll look forward to it.”

“Yeah.”

“What? The chibi’s never been there?”

Muir’s reaction is similar to my own, so It can be concluded she has never been to that village.

“Y-Yes. T-The truth is, well...”

It seems to be difficult to say, but I can sense that she believes that it is something she has to mention. But Hihiro waves his hands.

“Ah, if you don’t want to say it, you don’t have to.”

“Eh?”

Muir stares blankly at Hihiro. Arnold follows suit.

“I have no interest in you people’s past, so there’s no reason to force yourselves to tell me anything.”

“... T-That’s not it, but...”

Arnold looks towards the sad Muir, and tries to say something to lighten the atmosphere.

“As long as Hiiro’s fine with it, I guess we can leave it at that, Muir!”

“Oji-san...”

“Let’s just go already.”

Hiiro begins walking off. Arnold begins patting Muir’s head, and then whispers into her ear.

“I know that you’re anxious, but Hiiro is just being Hiiro, if you tell him, he’ll probably just respond with something like, ‘And so what?’”

“Y-Yeah... that’s true.”

Upon hearing Arnold’s words, it seems that a burden has been lifted from Muir’s chest.

“I hope that you will be able to tell him one day.”

“Yeah!”

“Now then, let’s get going so we don’t lose him!”

“Yeah!”

As he watched Muir running after Hiiro, he thought something like, ‘How cute’. If Hiiro had seen Arnold’s expression, he would have dragged him off to court already.

After walking for a bit, they come across the first monsters they had seen in a while.

“I think this was... a BukBuk?”

BukBuks are monsters that exist in the shape of books. It’s size is quite large. Moreover, this monster’s power comes from...

Snap Snap!

“Uoh! Quite a powerful bolt of lightning there.”

Arnold shouts out as he avoids it.

Right, BukBuks are monsters with the ability to use magic. What’s more, different species of the monster can learn different varieties of magic. However, it is difficult to tell apart BukBuk subspecies.

“It’s been a while since I’ve met a monster worth fighting. Old Man, I’ll leave that one to you.”

“Perfect! Watch Arnold-sama’s brilliant swordplay! Muir, back off!”

“F-Fine!”

We each take them on one at a time.

(The old man's one uses thunder. Mine is...)

Bang!

Suddenly a large hand emerges out of the ground, trying to grab Hiiro.

“I see, so your specialty is earth!”

Hiiro takes out Piercer and tears apart the earthen hand. But the BukBuk's magic causes several small fissures to open up. The fissures advance towards him, halting his movement.

“Don't be so conceited...”

Hiiro concentrates magic into his finger and writes *Quiet* in the air. He throws it at the ground and it activates.

The ground calms down, and the fissures stop in their tracks. The BukBuk seems to be quite confused, and it hesitates in casting its next spell.

“Perish!”

In that span of time, Hiiro quickly closes the gap between them. Quickly it erects a wall of dirt in front of itself.

“That isn't nearly enough to stop my advance!”

Without stopping, Hiiro thrusts his sword into the wall. And the blade passes through quite easily. The BukBuk behind the wall is also impaled. And after letting out a sound like that of stacks of paper falling to the ground, the monster stops moving.

“And now, the Old Man is...”

He seems to have already finished up. After dodging the thunder and closing the distance, it only took a single swing of his massive sword to end the BukBuk's existence.

“Did you see that!? That's my power! Nahahahahah!”

He seems to be in ecstasy. It may have been a troublesome monster, but it was definitely at a level we could have handled. Is it really that great to have beaten one of those? I let out a sigh.

After that battle, we met more monsters as we headed down the path. After overcoming numerous battlefields, we end up in a forest.

“If we get through this forest, we'll arrive at *Doggam* !”

“Don't you find it odd?”

“What?”

“There were so many monsters before, but once we entered this forest, we haven't seen a single one.”

“Aren’t they just afraid of us?”

“You sure are an easy going old man.”

“S-Sorry, whenever Oji-san gets conceited, he becomes like this.”

“I’ve already given up on him, so don’t worry.”

“Y-Yes... *sigh*”

Muir looks a little embarrassed as she stares at Arnold. It’s as if she’s a kid observing her father on Parent’s Day.

Arnold, who is strutting triumphantly, suddenly halts his march. Hihiro becomes worried, and calls out to him. He is giving off a nervous expression.

“Oi, what’s wrong?”

Hihiro asks that as he looks ahead, and in front, he sees a single boar. Hihiro thought it was just another monster, but strangely, it was a monster that wasn’t in any of Hihiro’s books. The boar had yet to notice the party’s approach, and it peacefully ate grass.

He had read about a similar monster, so he asks.

“Is that a Big Boar?”

“N-No, it’s...”

Arnold is acting strange. He seems to be afraid. The Big Boar Hihiro knew of had short brown hair, however, the monster in front of them was red.

“Hihiro... We’re running away.”

“Wha? What are you saying?”

“Don’t worry, just try to move without making a sound.”

Hihiro frowns upon seeing Arnold attempt to evade the quiet boar.

“What exactly are you doing, you pervert?”

“I keep telling you I’m not a pervert! ...Ah.”

Arnold lets out a large voice, and turns pale. Hihiro looks back at the boar and finds it staring angrily at them.

“D-Damn... This is your fault, Hihiro!”

“And so what? Is that monster something special?”

“T-That’s a Unique monster!”

“Unique?”

I believe that the books said that Unique monsters were exceedingly rare. And that they were exceedingly ferocious. Arnold's frantic expression seems to confirm this.

"T-That's a Red Boar. A Rank S monster!"

"Hmm."

Chapter 20: The Restrictions of Word Magic

Hiiro looks at the Red Boar once more.

To fight a Rank S monster, you usually have to be an adventurer of Rank S or above. Otherwise the danger level would be too high. However seeing his first Unique monster only interested Hiiro further.

“Old Man, what rank are you?”

“Me? I’m C, Rank C.”

“Hm, you’re quite high.”

“What about you?”

“I think it was E... no I became a D.”

When he last checked his Guild Card, it had shown Rank D. It seems that fighting monsters naturally improved his rank.

“C and D... It doesn’t look like we’re anywhere close to taking out an S.”

“Is that so?”

Unlike Arnold, Hiiro isn’t even flustered. However he still feels the hostility emanating from the Boar.

“W-We’ll have to run. We have Muir with us here.”

“Why must we do that? We can just bring it down.”

“Don’t ask for the impossible! Rank S is stronger than you thi—”

Before Arnold finished his sentence, the Red Boar begins charging. It was faster than any monster they’ve seen before. In an instant, Hiiro plants a kick on Arnold’s chest, kicking him out of the Boar’s path.

“Ow! Damn! It’s way too fast!”

Arnold is complaining, but Hiiro is the opposite.

(Amazing. So this is Rank S...)

The Red Boar has taken up a fighting stance. Its aura is quite formidable. What’s more, after they had avoided the charge, the boar was on a set course for a large tree; however, the one that broke was the tree. The Red Boar escaped with no injury.

(It’s skin and tusks seems to be quite hard. If I took that charge head-on, my HP would drop to 0.) If this were a game, he may have been able to stand it, but in real life a blow like that could cause instant

death. Hihiro scowls, wondering which case applied to this world. Whichever the case, he would like to avoid pain.

“O-Oi, Run away Hihiro! Muir, you too!”

Muir is shaking in fear, peeping out from a hiding place behind some trees.

The Red Boar faces us again.

“Alright, I’m going to kill that thing.”

“D-Don’t be stupid! There’s no way you can beat that!”

“Quiet. For me, there is no such thing as impossible.”

“For the love of—! Where does that confidence come from! Look, it’s coming again!”

Arnold avoids it by jumping, but Hihiro doesn’t even move.

“I-Idiot! Avoid it!”

The ground begins shaking, and cactus-like spikes emerge from the ground impaling the Red Boar... or not.

“Wha!?”

The spikes break upon contact with the Boars skin. And the charge doesn’t even slow down.

“Damn.”

Hihiro somehow avoided it by diving onto the ground, however he was angry at how his attack had no effect whatsoever. His dodge was a second too late, and his left hand came into contact with the Red Boar. The small impact rotated his entire body, and smacked him into the ground.

“Gu—!?”

His body was taken by intense pain.

“Hiro!”

Arnold calls out, but Hihiro had no spare time to answer. Ignoring the pain, he immediately stands back up. However he sways unsteadily.

“This bastard... You sure did quite a bit.”

He glares at the Red Boar.

(Perfect, there’s a character I’ve been wanting to test. I’ll use it on this one.) Hihiro concentrates magic on his finger and starts writing a character. It’s hard to move, and for some reason, it’s taking a long time to write. In that period of time, the Boar has already begun its next attack. It detaches its tusks and sends them straight at him.

(It can even do that!?)

Hihiro manages to dodge the tusks, but the Boar once again starts running at him. It's not giving him a chance to write anything.

Suddenly, Arnold slams his body into the boar's flank. The Boar braces his legs as not to fall, but as a consequence its charge was halted.

“How's that! Did you see? This is Arnold-sama's—”

The Red Boar's eyes glow a dangerous color as it stares at Arnold in anger.

“Ah, um, that is...”

While Arnold confronts the monster, Hihiro rushes to write his word.

(Damn! Move, my fingers!)

But his fingers are shaking and he can't write well. This only makes him more irritated. While he's doing that, the boar charges Arnold.

“Uhyaa!”

He avoids it by taking a large leap to the side. But then the flying tusks come after him. He uses his large sword to guard against them, but the impact in itself sends him flying.

“Guha! ... A-As I thought. It's too st...”

Arnold has a pained expression on his face, as he stares at his opponent who has yet to take a single point of damage.

(Just a little... Just a little longer and..... It's done!) He finished his character, and now all he had to do was hit the Boar with it. But the distance to the Red Boar is too long. At this distance, there is a high chance of missing.

“Old Man!”

“W-What is it! Did you finally decide to run?”

“You're in the way, move.”

“Wha!”

Hihiro needed the Red Boar to target him alone, so having Arnold there was a hinderance.

“What are you saying!”

“Don't worry, just go hide with the chibi. I'll do the rest.”

“...As if I could—Owaah!”

The Red Boar's tusks come at him again and he leaps to avoid them. Arnold looks at Hihiro's face, seeing

his determination. Thinking that he had some sort of plan, Arnold follows Hiiro's words and escapes.

"Now come, you reckless bastard. Come straight at me."

And as if he had heard Hiiro's words of provocation, the Red Boar faces him with an angry face and begins kicking the ground. With one last kick, he starts running at Hiiro with an amazing speed.

Hiiro points his finger at the charging Boar, and makes a gesture as if he were pulling the trigger of a gun.

(Take this!)

The Boar seems startled for a second as the character flies towards him, but it keeps confidence in its charge and doesn't try to dodge. As a result, the character hits the boar directly, and...

Whomp!

As if all of the power were drained out of its body, the Red Boar falls to the ground. The momentum from its charge causes it to slide on the ground for a distance.

(Good, it worked.)

Seeing the situation, the hiding Arnold and Muir slowly approach Hiiro.

"O-Oi, Hiiro. What the hell did you do?"

"Ah? I put it to sleep."

"Sleep!? H-How did you... ah, your cheating magic."

"Yeah."

Arnold notices something strange. Normally, Hiiro would take up a haughty attitude here, but it seems that his heart is elsewhere.

Hiiro looks back at the sleeping Boar.

(I put it to sleep. That's good. But I took way too long to do it.) Unlike usual, it took him around 30 seconds to write a single character.

(Since I was using magic to forcefully change my target's state was that a Rebound ? Altering the state of a living being other than myself seems to produce this effect. Writing Sleep() took this much effort. What would Death() take?...) As he was thinking this, a shiver goes down his spine.

(No, as long as I keep the image of Death() in my mind, I shouldn't get a Rebound . Even for Sleep() , more than Rebound , it felt like it was just difficult to write. It seems that some words require a bit of compensation. I wonder if different words require different obeisances.) Right, a Rebound is supposed to bring disaster unto one's self. This time, the writing speed simple dropped. It didn't feel like a Rebound .

(Needle() and Hard() have an AOE of 4 tatami (6.61 m²). No matter how hard I tried to imagine the effect, that area was the limit. There's always a restriction. So each word has its own

restrictions. That’s all I need to know right now. And for now…) Hiiro walks over to the sleeping Red Boar. The effect should last for 1 minute, so it should wake up soon.

“I’ll be taking your life now.”

He tries to shove Piercer through its body, but it’s quite tough. As expected of an S-rank monster.

“Ha!”

He uses all of his strength, and finally the blade goes through the skin. The Red Boar convulses violently and finally perishes.

Beeeeeeep. A sound that he hadn’t heard in a while echoes through his head. Hiiro checked his status.

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 33	
HP:	102/610	ATK:	216278
MP:	123/1290	DEF:	165180
		AGL:	301303
EXP:	33089	HIT:	164172
NEXT:	4210	INT:	267271
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked, Air Writing Unlocked, Parallel Writing Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master, Awakened One, Ripper, One Who Imagines, Killer of the Unique, Gourmet Bastard, One Who Follows His Own Path			

Chapter 21: The Importance of Level

Hiiro had almost spent all of his MP in that encounter. However, it seemed to be worth the effort. The S-rank monster seemed to have given enough experience to increase his level by four.

It seemed like his HP had been reduced by a considerable amount. Only one light hit had reduced Hiiro's HP by over half of its original amount.

Some new titles and skills have been added to Hiiro's status. He quickly opened a skill called Multiple Chain .

Multiple Chain Mana Cost: 50

You can write more than one character. Writing another character while another character is active will not stop the first character's effects. Also, you can write the same character continuously which produces a synergistic effect.

Hiiro smiles deviously. He realized that he no longer had to wait 40 seconds before starting to write another character.

Writing a character continuously has many benefits. This skill would have been helpful when Hiiro had to pass through the checkpoint. Hiiro could have continuously written Fly without alternating between Fly and Float .

This synergistic effect however...

"Did you see your status?"

Arnold's voice woke up Hiiro from his thoughts.

"So Hiiro, how many times did you level up?"

"You leveled up?"

"No, I didn't. I'm just curious."

"You are? Do you want to know how much experience the killing blow gave?"

"I just want to see how much experience being in a party that killed an S-rank monster can give me."

I see. You can register a party with the guild. If you fight a monster with a party member both gain the same amount of experience. However, me and Arnold obtained different amounts of experience since we weren't in a party together.

"Oh, we could have registered as a party in Surge if you wanted to Hiiro."

“Me and Oji-san are in a party together!”

“Hey Hihiro what level are you?”

“Old Man tell me what level you are first.”

“Do I have to? I’m 35.”

“Crap!”

“...Me? Wait what did you say?”

“...”

“So what level are you?”

I was a bit angry that my level is still slightly lower than Arnold’s.

“By the way, Muir is only level 13.”

“Yup!”

“So what level are you?”

“...33.”

“That’s amazing! But wait was that your level before or after you beat the S-rank monster.”

“Before I beat the Red Boar I was around 29.”

“I wonder if there is anyone insane enough in this world other than you that would fight a Unique monster... and beat it while below level 30.”

“Hey pervert. What did you just say?”

“I’m not a pervert! That monster was level 50 or higher! You were about half of that. That just leaves me speechless.”

Hihiro thought about it for a while. It seems to be an abnormal situation if he was the average adventurer. However, in this world just because you have higher stats it doesn’t mean that you are guaranteed to win.

Hihiro’s HP was greatly damaged when he took a single blow by the Red Boar. But with his word magic he was able to defeat the boar.

Unique magic is ridiculously overpowered.

Without my word magic it would have been smarter to escape like Arnold said. Fighting the boar normally at this level was reckless.

“I’m going to get the parts of the Red Boar that can be exchanged at the guild.”

“Which parts do you want?”

“The usual parts...”

“...I see.”

Arnold nodded, and started to collect the body parts. The Red Boar’s fangs seem to be discolored, but this is probably a characteristic of a Unique monster.

“But I’m surprised.... To even encounter a Unique monster in this area.”

“Is it that unusual?”

“Well... it is unusual because they are so rare. In all the time I went around the world I never saw one before.”

“I see. This guy has seen more than the regular adventurer, but has never encountered a Unique monster before.”

Without us killing this S-rank monster there would have been many deaths. Many adventurers would have died from trying to kill it.

“However, since this guy died, I’m afraid that the monsters in the forest might show up.”

“Yeah that might happen.”

Since we came into the forest, we haven’t encountered any monsters. The Red Boar seems to be the reason why all the monsters ran away.

“Well this seems to be a good thing. It looks like we won’t have any monsters attacking us immediately.”

While Arnold was stretching his hands out, the monsters that were waiting suddenly appeared.

“The lie I...”

Arnold’s thoughts weren’t unreasonable, but turned out to be completely wrong.

“Hey Old Man, I’m tired, so take care of them.”

“What? Help me!”

“They aren’t Unique monsters. So you probably won’t die... so hang in there.”

“Please help me!”

“Fine I’ll protect Muir, but you do the rest of the work.”

“Nooooo! Please help me!”

“So noisy. Just kill them already.”

“Understood. I’ll be thorough.”

Arnold then jumps into the swarm of monsters.

Huh, I wonder if he will die?

Muir shyly looks at me expecting something.

“Well, fine I’ll heal the old man if he manages to survive.”

After Hiiro said this, Muir sits down next to the tree she was leaning on.

“Muir are you tired?”

“I am, but I’m going to stay awake. So I might help the old man if he needs me.”

Muir says this with folded arms. She judged that she would help the old man more if she was fully recovered, and she decided to rest.

Muir without falling asleep watched Arnold’s desperate fight as the day passed slowly.

After some time Arnold comes back to the place where Hiiro and Muir were resting.

“I’m tired.”

“Good work Oji-san!”

“That smile makes me feel so much better!”

Muir’s smile makes Arnold feel a bit better. Arnold then glares at the sleeping Hiiro.

“You, kid. While I was desperately fighting, instead of watching Muir you sleep?!?”

While Arnold holds his fist while clenching his teeth, Hiiro says, “Because I defeated a Unique monster by myself I was tired.”

“No..... To refer to that as an ordeal is... This guy, what nerve!”

“Hehehe, yeah.”

Arnold sits down next to the resting Muir and Hiiro. The sunlight coming down from the trees gently wraps around them like a blanket.

“Hiiro who are you really?”

“What do you mean?”

“You are stronger than most people with your unique magic. That arrogant attitude... well leaving that aside. You are traveling alone, and you want to go to the Beastman’s continent.”

“Well... I just wanted to go the Beastman continent.”

“Well. The ordinary adventurer wouldn’t have done anything similar to what you’ve done so far. Also, the fight with the Red Boar from before was almost suicide.”

“It was...”

Muir also hears the truth in Arnold's speech and nods.

"Also for a level 33 your physical abilities are exceedingly strong. Also, your personality..."

"Hehehe, personality shouldn't matter that much."

"This is the first time I've seen such a brat. I have never seen anyone like you before even among the Beastmen."

"Yeah, I'm not interested."

"You look down on most guys, I fear that you will get into a bad situation soon."

"Eh, leave me alone."

Arnold looks at Muir's face that shows confusion.

"Muir are you still afraid of humans?"

"Yeah I am, but..."

"What about me?"

"Well... Hihiro isn't that bad."

"I also don't think Hihiro is that bad." Arnold continues. "He is completely different from the humans I've met so far."

"Haha, am I?"

"Sadly, you seem to be the reincarnation of a demon. The way you look at Muir is sickening."

Muir laughs even though she knows about the existence of Evila.

"I'm glad that Muir is able to laugh like that."

"Oji-san..."

"You were entrusted to me by that guy. I will do everything in my power to keep you safe."

"...No, even I will become stronger. I want to be like Oji-san and the other Beastmen when I grow up!"

"Muir..."

While Arnold and Muir both stare at each other, Arnold gently strokes her head. Muir smiles happily.

Hihiro slightly opens his eyes. After he sees these two in such a situation, he closes them and falls back to sleep.

Chapter 22: The Bear People of Doggam

“Now then, let’s hurry.”

Hihiro slowly gets up and begins walking. Arnold glares at him with his eyes half closed.

“...If you’ve already healed, then I guess it’s alright. Wait, we were supposed to be waiting for you!”

“Fufufu, let’s go!”

With Muir’s urging, the group presses onwards.

After walking a while, they found what seemed to be the forest’s exit.

“Oh, finally!”

Arnold suddenly walks faster. After leaving the forest, the three found themselves in a large field of flowers.

“Uwa~”

Muir stares in silence, as if she had lost the ability to speak. A gentle wind causes the petals to sway back and forth. It’s a magnificent sight.

“This is the Doggam Garden .”

“So these were planted by the Bearnts ?”

“Yeah. It’s pretty, ain’t it? The scent is also divine.”

A scent sweet enough to cause one to drool lingered in the air. The mixed varieties of flowers here probably carried a wide assortment of delicious nectars.

“And right after this, we should reach the Bearnt village, Doggam !”

Past the field, they could see a village. The village was quite small, as if it were trying to hide itself from the world.

When they entered the village, Hihiro and company see the Bearnt people gathered in a wide, open space. They try to see what’s going on.

“What’s up?”

“Eh? O-Oh! It’s been a while, Arnold!”

“Yo, Max! You’re just as fat as usual!”

They grasp each other's shoulders as they give greetings.

"Hm? Arnold... Your ears..."

"Ah? Haha, well yeah."

Arnold's face looks pained. But he quickly recovers, and takes on his cheerful persona.

"Let me introduce you. This is the Bearnt Max. We shared a drink the last time I came through this village."

Arnold turns to Hihiro and Muir, and introduces the man. Max's smile flashes a hint of sadness.

"Max, let me introduce these two."

He turns again to Max.

"This child is my lovely angel, my cutie flower, Muir Castrea!"

Though he says this with a determined tone, everyone stares at him with a blank expression. Muir's face slowly turns red.

"P-Please treat me well!"

She quickly lowers her head. The sight of her doing so causes those watching the scene to smile.

"Yeah~ and the other one is just as he looks. He's a brat called Hihiro."

His treatment is clearly different, but Hihiro didn't particularly care.

"The two of you are welcome here! My name is Max!"

His body is quite stalky. No, it's more like he just has a lot of excess fat.

(He looks more like a pig than a bear.)

Hihiro thinks something incredibly rude, as Arnold questions Max on the reason everyone was gathered there.

And then Max's face turns serious.

"Ah, the truth is that someone saw a Unique monster in the forest. We're here thinking up countermeasures."

Arnold looks like he wants to say something.

"Even if we try to do something, our opponent is Rank S. This village does not have the power to do anything about it."

"R-Rank S? U-Um, Max...?"

"What?"

“W-Was that Unique monster possibly... a Red Boar?”

“Yeah, I’m surprised you know. You’re correct!”

‘More than simply knowing, we encountered it head-on, and this brat killed it, you know.’ Arnold screams in his heart.

“Oh yeah, where did you guys come from, anyways? Did you go through the forest? Then luck must be on your side. If you encountered it, you would have died.”

“Well, something did die...”

“What do you mean?”

Arnold sighs, and then begins telling the truth.

“HHWWWAAATT!? You KEEEEELED the Unique monster!?”⁶

It’s not just Max. Everyone in the surrounding area has surprise written on their faces.

“Y-Yeah. The one who did it was this brat. Here’s the evidence.”

And he brings out the salvaged monster parts as evidence. The crowd gets even more excited.

“WhaWhaWhaWhat’s going on, Arnold!? What is he!? Is he an SSS rank?”

“N-No... He’s a D-rank Adventurer...”

“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?”

Max’s mouth hangs open as he stares at Hiiro.

“D-Did this guy really kill it? This short, evil-eyed brat!?”

Max thrusts his finger at Hiiro. Hiiro grabs it.

Twist...

“Stoooooop!”

“I hate it when people point at me.”

The area becomes silent. Time seems to have stopped for the villagers. Arnold lets out a deep sigh.

“I’m serious, people. I can’t go that far in depth, but the Unique monster is already gone, this guy is the one that killed it, and the village is now safe. Please just leave it at that.”

Hiiro seems to be slightly impressed. If Arnold had tried to explain his special magic, then he would have smacked him. But it seems that Arnold respects his privacy. Hiiro’s impression of Arnold has improved a bit.

And so the village’s crisis was averted. The monster never reached the village, and no casualties arose.

Hihiro's slaying of the Red Boar earned him quite a bit of attention.

The feeling of being stared at was quite uncomfortable, but as the villagers made his food extra tasty, Hihiro decided to put up with it.

"But I'm surprised that you're alright, Arnold."

Max stares at his sake as he speaks.

"What is this about?"

"I heard a rumor that a beastman that looked like you had been enslaved by humans. I thought that was definitely you... Your ears, did they do something to you?"

"...Pretty much."

Arnold's ears which were firmly printed in Max's memory were nowhere to be seen. And he remembered the rumor of the beastman-turned-slave.

"It seems that you've been through a lot. The Humas race really does terrible things."

Max did not get visibly angry, but his words seemed to carry a menacing tone. Arnold feels a little happy that his friend is getting angry for his sake.

"Yeah, I definitely don't want to return to that time. But right now, I am living quite happily, Max."

"Arnold..."

"I've even started doing the things I wanted to. I became a chef, and I even have a daughter."

"Oh yeah, when did you get that girl, anyways?"

Arnold squints as he looks at the smiling Max.

"Don't get me wrong. Though she's my daughter, we're not related by blood."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. A good friend entrusted her to me."

Arnold stares into the distance, and Max downs his sake in one swig. He sighs.

"It seems that you really have been through a lot."

"Yep... Many things happened."

The two are enveloped in silence for a while.

“Then what is that kid? He seems to be a Beastman, of the same race as the girl.”

Arnold winces. Currently, Hihiro is using his magic to disguise himself. As a result, he has the same silver hair as Muir.

“Um... It’s that! He’s Muir’s brother!”

“So that’s it? No wonder they looked so much alike!”

(I think Hihiro is going to punch me later...)

Thinking about his dismal situation, Arnold starts to feel the air getting colder.

“But that kid really is crazy. I’ve never heard of someone taking out a Red Boar alone before.”

“Y-Yeah. That guy is a bit strange.”

‘In many ways’ said Arnold in his heart

“I won’t press it any further. You guys are this village’s saviors, so just take it easy for a bit.”

“Thanks, Max.”

“Oi, Chibi. Don’t be so picky.”

Hihiro is holding up a green pea-like food that Muir seems to be avoiding.

“Eh... but...”

“If you hate it so much, then...”

He wraps the peas in some meat, and wraps that in more vegetables.

“Here, eat this.”

“...Okay.”

Even as he hands it over, Muir’s eyes seem to show some resistance. Her upturned eyes seemed to say, ‘Do I really have to eat it?’ And in response, Hihiro’s eyes seem to say, ‘If you don’t eat it, I’ll force it on you’. Then Hihiro shoves the food in her mouth.

Muir closes her eyes as she chews. And then opens them with a confused look.

(That terrible feeling is gone?)

As if he could read Muir's mind, Hihiro begins speaking.

“The reason you hated it was probably because of the texture, or the smell. All you have to do is get rid of that. This meat has quite a strong smell and these vegetables have a firm texture. They'll help you get over your hatred of those beans.”

“A-Amazing. You're almost like my uncle.”

Hihiro lightly hits Muir's head.

“Nyu!?”

“Who's like that old man?”

Hihiro frowns as he continues to stuff food in his mouth. Muir tilts her head, wondering where exactly he puts all of that food in his slender body.

(If I had a brother... would it feel like this?) She gets a slightly warm feeling inside of her chest. She had never thought of it before, but Hihiro's current hair color might be giving her such ideas.

Arnold watches the two and stares at Hihiro as if he were going to shoot him to death.

But the Bear People around them simply misunderstood the situation and thought, ‘Yep, those two are definitely siblings.’ Arnold's concern was unnecessary.

After the group continued eating for a while, a group of women in dancer-like clothes that had high exposure rates came out. It seems that they were going to perform a folk dance.

A person comes out carrying a drum. He rhythmically beats it, and the dancers move to match the rhythm.

“Wow~! Those people are really pretty~ and the dancing is skillfull~”

Muir holds her hands together, and admires them. But Hihiro seems to be more focused on the food in front of him. After filling his mouth, he glances at the dancers.

(I see. So the Bear Race has slender people as well.) And once again, he thinks something rude before shifting his eyes back to the food. But Muir seems to be captivated, and Arnold seems to be enamored.

“Oh~ How indecent.”

Muir feels as if his father had made lecherous eyes at some random girl. She's quite embarrassed.

“Please contain yourself!”

And she heads towards Arnold. Hiirou continues pressing food to his lips, as he stares at the night sky. He sees a shooting star, and thinks, ‘How peaceful.’

ARNOLD OCEAN	Lv. 35
HP: 355/355 MP: 189/189 EXP: 50089 NEXT: 6210	ATK: 358402 DEF: 323339 AGL: 298303 HIT: 222224 INT: 102
Magic Attribute Wind Magic Fangs of Wind, Explosive Wind Claw, Blast Inversion Titles Friend of the Wind, Former Slave, Chef, Doting Father, Man of a Burning Soul, The Man Referred to As a Pervert	

Name: Arnold Ocean	Rank: C
Sex: Male	Equipment
Age: 37	▪ Weapon: Great Sword
Race: Beastman	▪ Guard: Plate Armor
From: Snyoll	▪ Accessory: Bracelet of the Wind
Quest:	
	Rigin: 1,393,000

MUIR CASTREA	Lv. 13
HP: 111/111 MP: 82/82 EXP: 12655 NEXT: 2210	ATK: 102105 DEF: 100108 AGL: 99102 HIT: 7778 INT: 54
Magic Attribute Magic Titles Kidnapped, My Angel, Cutie Flower, Girl of Tolerance	

Name: Muir Castrea	Rank: F
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Sex: Female
Age: 12
Race: Beastman
From: Rince

- Equipment
- Weapon: Knife
 - Guard: Traveler's Clothes
 - Accessory: Nameless Bracelet

Quest:

Rigin: 56,000

Chapter 23: The Determination of Vale

“...Sigh.”

How many times had he sighed since then? The person sighing an uncountable number times was a certain Vale Kimble. He was sitting in a chair in the resting room for the soldiers on the training ground hanging his head.

“Hey, what do you think’s wrong with Vale?”

In worry, Aoyama Taishi asks his companions, Suzumiya Chika, Minamoto Shuri and Akamori Shinobu. The other three tilt their heads.

“It seems that he hasn’t been having any of his usual energy lately.”

“Since when was it again?”

Chika asks. The one that answers is Shinobu.

“It’s been like this since Vale left to visit the Guild.”

“I believe he said that there was a dependable person whose help he wished to enlist.”

Shuri adds some information.

“And after he returned... He’s been like that.”

“What exactly happened to him?”

Chika asks as she wipes some sweat off of her forehead. The group had just been training with the soldiers. Chika trained especially hard, so she’s sweating profusely.

“What should we do? Should we ask him?”

“Yeah, but he’s kinda hard to approach.”

The air seems stagnant. It’s not really an atmosphere where they can talk to him.

After they watched him for a while, a girl dressed in pink entered the room. That person was the Royal Capital Victorias’ oldest princess, Lilith van Strauss Arclaim.

She approached the four with a smile on her face.

“Good work, Heroes!”

“Lilith-sama must have some difficult work with public affairs as well.”

Taishi returns those words to the princess.

“Eh, um, what’s wrong?”

“Why are you talking so stiffly, Taishi-sama!”

“T-That is...”

Taishi fidgets as his eyes wander around the room.

“Didn’t you promise!? I told you to call me Lilith. Also, please stop talking to me like that. I thought Taishi-sama would understand!”

She approaches with her cheeks puffed up.

“G-Got it! I got it, so don’t get so close, Lilith!”

“Ah, s-sorry!”

Lilith appears to be very flustered as she takes some distance from Taishi. Her face is died a deep shade of red.

“N-No, it’s not like I hate it. Haha.”

Taishi shyly hangs his head.

“Stop it, you two!”

Taishi suddenly feels an incredible amount of pressure on his foot.

“Oi, Chika! What are you doing!?”

Chika had stomped on Taishi’s foot with all of her might.

“Nothing really. I was just annoyed that your thoughts were written right on your face. Hmph!”

“Hey, that hurts!”

She steps on it again. Taishi begins tearing up as he pleads to Lilith and Shuri to help him. Shinobu is laughing as she watches the scene.

“Ahaha! As expected, Taishi and Chika’s relationship is funny~”

“What’s with that! Stupid Taishi, your blushing face is unsightly!”

“Oh? Are you perhaps jealous?”

“Idi—! You’re wrong idiot!”

From watching this display, everyone present was able to understand Chika’s feelings. Except Taishi.

“Ufufunofu~ Falling for a dense man is tough~”

Shinobu teases Chika while smiling.

“I-I don’t care anymore! I’m going back to training!”

She says so as she storms out of the room. Seeing her leave, Shinobu once again bursts into laughter.

“Chika’s so cute. She’s slender and polite. Taishi is a lucky one.”

“W-With what? I was just in a lot of pain. Where does this luck come from?”

Shinobu makes a deep sigh as Taishi attempts to explain that he’s not a masochist.

“Ah, if you stay like that, Hime-sama and Chika will have a lot of trouble.”

She laughs as she sympathizes with them.

“Anyways, were you people talking about something before I arrived?”

Lilith asks. The group explains the content of their conversation to her.

“So do you think something happened?”

“That’s what I can’t understand. I would ask, but he’s hard to approach right now...”

“There’s no helping it, I’ll go ask then.”

“Shinobu will?”

“Yeah, aren’t I the perfect person for this?”

“I’m not sure what criteria you’re using, but will you really be alright?”

“Leave it to me~”

She says as she heads to the break room.

Vale was thinking over the things told to him by Guildmaster Judom Lankars.

(So the Evila King has changed, and that new King has sent multiple requests for peace talks, but our country has done nothing but ignore them...) He was also told this: Before my daughter became a sacrifice, before you called over some bystanders to play Hero, wasn’t there something we should have done?

And he was told that he was still too immature.

(Why did the kingdom ignore... no, I understand the reason for that. There's still a high chance we'll get betrayed like before.) When the previous Evila King had asked for peace talks and this country accepted, it was a trap, and many Humas had to become sacrifices. That was why the king could do nothing but reject these new offers.

(But...)

That's exactly why we have to communicate. That's what Judom said.

(And are the Heroes truly trustworthy individuals...?) Judom asserted that the inhabitants of another world would be unable to sympathize with the populace. For now, everything is still fine. With their high physical abilities, and magical attributes the heroes should be able to easily overcome most obstacles.

But will they really fight with their lives on the line for the sake of another world? Do such philanthropists exist in this universe? When Judom asked him this, Vale's mind became blank.

The reason for this was because Judom's argument was sound. It wasn't something based on opinion or bias. They would always use the word game. Like a game... If it was a game, then... Unlike a game... Whenever Vale heard these words, he somehow felt that these people had too little resolve.

(I thought it was because they were still young, and were not used to battle... but...) Vale himself was still stronger than them individually at the moment. But they had the talent to take him out in an instant if they worked together. They were a major asset. But there was always someone stronger.

The Evila probably have plenty of people that could deal with them easily.

(If... If someone in their group were to die... would they...) Would they still fight for us? Many questions that he couldn't answer surfaced in his head. Judom said that they had to return the heroes to their original world unharmed.

(What should I...)

As he closed his eyes tightly to think, Vale noticed the presence of someone behind him.

"What's up, Vale?"

"...Shinobu-sama?"

Behind him was Akamori Shinobu.

"You haven't been energetic lately, is something wrong? Everyone is worried."

"...I apologize."

"Eh? Ah, no it's not something you have to apologize for."

Shinobu sits next to him and asks again.

"So, is something wrong?"

"Sigh... Well..."

There's no way he could say it. That he had doubts of the person beside him. But he wanted to ask whether she could risk her life.

(If they learn the reality of death, will they leave the country...? Even after I've watched them grow to this level...) His head could think of nothing but negative thoughts.

"Is Vale worrying about something related to us?"

Vale's shoulders tensed in response. Shinobu is able to effectively pick this up.

"Ah~ As I thought. So what is it? Will something happen to us?"

It's not like Shinobu was especially sharp. It's just that she noticed that Vale had been avoiding the four of them lately. As she looks at Vale, she feels a little sorry for him.

"...I can't say it."

".....I see. Then you don't really have to."

"...What?"

Vale frowns.

"It doesn't look like it's something you have to answer immediately. You can take time and find your answer, right?"

"T-That is..."

"Or if you don't get an answer now, will the world end?"

Shinobu shows a serious expression for a second.

"N-No such a thing won't happen all of a sudden!"

"Then isn't it fine?"

"..."

"I don't know what you're worrying about, but Vale should be doing the things he has to do!"

"Things I have to do?"

Returning you all to your own world? He wanted to ask.

"And that's making us stronger."

"S-Stronger?"

"Of course. You don't know when the Evila will attack, right? So what you have to be doing is preparing for that possibility by making the four of us stronger."

"Shinobu-sama..."

“To be honest, I’m a little afraid. This place may look like a game, but it’s not a game.”

Once again, the word game came up. But this time it carried a greater resolve.

“I don’t really want to die, and I think I may run from fear.”

That’s a given. Vale and everyone else had thoughts like that too.

“However, if we all support each other, we’ll definitely be fine!”

Upon hearing these words, a single light shines in Vale’s empty mind. Vale stands up from his chair and faces the girl.

“Let’s go, Shinobu-sama! As you said, we must do what we can for now!”

“Yeah, that’s the spirit!”

Shinobu feels happy from the bottom of her heart that Vale was able to regain some of his energy. Vale was able to erase some of his doubts.

(That’s right. I can’t give up. I need to believe. In the King. In the Heroes. Once again... I’ll go meet Judom-sama once more!) With a strong resolve, he walks out of the resting room into the outside world.

But he still hadn’t noticed. That the answer he reached right now didn’t really resolve anything. If he were to realize the truth, the shock would only be greater now than before.

And he still hadn’t noticed. That whether he liked it or not, he would have to put everything on the line to take from others their everything.

Chapter 24: Honey Gathering

“And? Why do I have to dress like this?”

Hihiro wasn't wearing his usual red robe. He was dressed in thick, white work clothes from head to toe, with a net covering his face. He was even wearing dense leather gloves.

This is that, isn't it? The clothes beekeepers wear in order to collect honey.

“Hey, Old Man. Could the honey here be produced by bees?”

“Bees? I don't know what you're talking about, but the honey here is made by Honey Bees.”⁷

Those are bees all the same, is what Hihiro wanted to shout out. But there was something he wanted to confirm before that.

“Old Man, didn't you say the honey was something the Bearnt people produced?”

“Ah? Did I say something like that?”

“You definitely did. To forget what you said yourself, are you going senile, pervert?”

“It's been a while since you said it you bastard! Who's a pervert!?”

“Gahaha! The thing we make isn't the honey. We make Honey Confectionaries .”

Max, dressed in the same garb as Hihiro says this. He's probably going as well.

“Hm? I think there was an MP restoring item called Honey Candy . Is that one of your products?”

“Yeah, that's an item made by mixing in the flower White Iris . We breed those flowers selectively and control the flow of the product in the world.”

“I see. And? Why do I have to dress like this?”

“Of course, because you're going to go gather the honey, right?”

“Cut the crap, sexual deviant.”

“Ah, he changed my name again! I really don't like this change!”

“Anyways, I'm not going.”

Saying that, Hihiro throws his gloves at the ground.

“Don't worry. Right now, the Honey Bees shouldn't be here. There's no danger. C'mon.”

“Say that from the start... Is what you thought I would say? This Old Man has the resolve to get stung

repeatedly in order to retrieve delicious honey for me, his lord.”

“Gununununu! Why would I get anything for you!? And when did you ever become my lord!?”

“’Twas a joke.”

“I know, but still I’m angry!”

Watching the two quarrel, Max goes to Muir.

“Are those two always like that?”

“P-Pretty much...”

“I see...”

Hihiro ditches the work clothes, and once again dons his red robe. He seems to have absolutely no intention of going. Seeing him, Arnold begins smiling.

“Oi, oi. Are you sure about that, Hihiro?”

“Ah?”

“Of course, I could infiltrate the Honey Bee nest, take the honey and come back to let you eat it. It would probably be plenty tasty.”

“...What are you trying to say?”

“But do you know when Honey Bee honey, Honey Syrup is tastiest?”

“...”

“That’s right after it’s taken out of its holding area.”

Upon hearing those words, Hihiro’s index finger twitches for a moment.

“What’s more, look at this.”

Saying that, he takes out a biscuit from a bag.

“This is a biscuit specially made by the Bearnt people. You’re supposed to douse it in Honey Syrup the second you obtain it. Ah~ the taste of it is heavenly.”

“.....”

“How unfortunate. It seems you’re not going, so you’ll have to make do with the lesser quality Honey Syrup afterwards. Meanwhile, we’ll be savoring the best quality of goods... wait, what?”

Hihiro disappeared before his very eyes. Arnold looks everywhere to find him. But what comes into his vision is a fully equipped Honey Gathering Expert.

“I’ve said this time and again, but mention that first. Now then, let’s go already Little Girl Kidnapper.”

“W-Who’s a kidnapper you damn brat!”

Watching the two quarrel, Max goes to Muir.

“Are those two always like that?”

“P-Pretty much...”

“I see...”

These two also follow closely behind Hiiro.

Hiiro, who had lost to his appetite, resolved himself to go through some trouble. His face is warped with the desire to eat the best quality food as he hurries towards the Honey Bee nest.

He was relieved that the place was supposed to be close by, but when he finally arrived, he stared at his destination in dismay.

In front of him was a big... very big bee hive. Its size was around that of a house.

“Oi, isn’t this a little too big?”

“Hahaha, actually, this is my first time gathering honey as well... This is a bit surprising.”

Watching the two, Max lets out a hearty laugh.

“Isn’t this to be expected? Honey Bees are about as big as babies. How would they live without a nest this big?”

“I think the books said they were around 30 Tails long.”

Hiiro searches through his memory and produces this information. By the way, this world’s measurement of a Tail is about the equivalent of a centimeter. The only thing different is the name.

“Well then, should we go in?”

Max says this and leads Hiiro’s group to the other side of the hive. There, they find an area with something that looked like a handle sticking out.

Max places the large bag he had with him on the ground. He firmly grasps the handle, and pulls it with all of his might. As if it were a desk drawer, a section of the hive was slowly pulled out.

Immediately, the air fills with the sweet smell of honey. Enough to make Hiiro and his companions gulp unintentionally. After he pulled out around half of the drawer, Max stopped.

“Hey, look.”

Where Max was pointing was a series of crevices inside of the hive. The formation looked like a Sudoku board with the walls representing the frame.

And inside of these crevices was a soft spongy substance. Max takes that out and wrings it out over a bottle he produced from his bag.

And viscous liquid slowly flows from it. Steadily, the honey settles into the bottom of the bottle.

“You guys should try it as well.”

He steps aside and points Hiiro’s group to the spongy substance. Hiiro takes it in his hand.

(I see, so this is how they gather it.)

Hiiro recorded the knowledge in his head as he begins to wring it out. But he quickly gets tired of it, and puts his hand on Arnold’s shoulder, saying he would leave it to him.

“Hey! You’ll get honey on my shoulder!”

“It’s already on it anyways.” Hiiro takes off his gloves, and takes a biscuit out of Arnold’s pocket.

“Oi, wait!”

“It’s fine, just do your job Old Man.”

“I don’t want to hear that from you!”

After Arnold’s shouting stops, Max shrugs his shoulders.

Hiiro soaks the biscuit in plenty of honey. The honey itself is orange in color, and quite thick. Its smell is enough to clearly convey its sweetness.

Firstly, Hiiro puts the honey itself into his mouth.

“N.....ooh.”

It’s an extremely concentrated sweetness. On top of that, it is a bit sour. It may be because it had been fermenting. This honey truly is top class.

Without losing any momentum, Hiiro shoves the biscuit in his mouth.

“...Yes. It’s quite tasty.”

Without a doubt, it’s tasty. This is an item that would definitely be popular with women. But Hiiro was a holder of quite a sweet tooth, so he enjoyed just as much. Before he noticed it, the biscuits were gone.

“Uooooooooi! Did you eat all of them by yourself!?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t yes me! This is the true surprise! I’ve once again confirmed that you’re an irreconcilable bastard!”

“No crying over spilt milk. What a petty man.”

“How should I shut that mouth of yours?”

The force exerted on the sponge in his hand increases.

“Gahaha! If it’s biscuits, then I have plenty with me. Don’t worry.”

“I see. Good work.”

“You still plan on eating more!?”

“Don’t underestimate my power.”

“Wha!?”

“My stomach... Is still calling out.”

“I’m going to kill yooou!”

And after various things happened, they filled all of their jars with honey, and pushed the drawer back in. Finally, they shared a meal together.

“Oh! What a delicacy! As expected of Honey Syrup !”

Arnold holds his hands together in praise.

“Quiet. Don’t be so rowdy in the middle of a meal.”

“Nu...kku... damn... brat...”

Arnold had felt a little embarrassed for his sudden outburst, but hearing this from Hiiro pissed him off.

“Gahaha! Arnold is quite a spoiled man!”

Max laughs happily as he snacks on a biscuit.

NomNomNomNomNomNomNom

Muir is wholeheartedly eating them... nibbling on them?

Seeing her, Arnold’s expression turns warm.

“Ha~ Why must she be so cute~?”

“You’re creepy.”

“What the hell!”

“Then let me rephrase that. You’re disgusting.”

“Don’t those mean the same?”

“Gahaha.”

NomNomNom

As the four happily(?) ate, a buzzing sound begins to sound.

“It seems the lord is coming back.”

A large group of bees clouds the sky. The size of each individual bee is incomparable to that of a normal one.

“Oi, oi. Isn’t this nest too small for that amount?”

“This isn’t the only one. There are six hives in total.”

“I see, then it seems plausible.”

A large Honey Bee starts flying straight at them. Hiiro and Arnold immediately take a stance, but...

“Ah, I left my sword behind.”

Arnold is the same. Arnold stands in front of Muir, and Hiiro prepares to write a word. But Max slowly stands up and laughs.

“Once again, thanks for the splendid honey.”

As if in response, the bee bobs up and down in the air.

“We’ll make another hive soon, so have fun until then.”

Up. Down. Up. Down.

After that short interaction the bee returns to the flock.

In exchange for the Bearnt building them sturdy hives, the Honey Bees offer a portion of their honey. That’s the agreement between the two parties. It was a contract that existed longer than anyone could remember. The Bee that stopped by earlier was the Queen.

“Hey, wait a second. Then why am I wearing this?”

As Hiiro says this, the two besides Max nod.

“Well it’s not like there’s no meaning to it.”

“What do you mean?”

“This area is swarming with many bugs. Especially after we take out honey...”

Suddenly a swarm of smaller bugs descends on the group.

(T-This feels disgusting.)

The various bugs crawl all over their bodies. Muir has an expression hinting at the end of the world

before she loses consciousness. Arnold, who is carrying her, and even Hiiro, pray to god for the end of this ordeal.

“Now then. Since we’ve been eating for a while, the amount of bugs will be considerable. What should we do?”

““Run!””

“I see.”

With all their strength, the four leave the area.

Chapter 25: Tasty Honey Sweets

Hiiro went back to the village, and ordered for the making of Honey Candy with the Honey Syrup . That was just how tasty he found the honey.

Arnold and Muir both went somewhere, so Hiiro was alone and planned to have a nice day relaxing. He went to the flower garden near the village and took out a book.

By the way, this was something borrowed from Max's house. Of course, with permission.

The Adventures of Tyn Cal Weikl .

Such was written on the cover. Somehow, he could read the language of this world, as it got translated when it entered his head. According to the guild, the language of this world was called Ranalyth , and was quite different from Japanese.

But Hiiro could read the words as if they were written in Japanese. This was most likely an ability he got upon transferring worlds. His mind was able to instantly translate the words he read. However because of this, in order to write the language, he would need formal training.

To tell the truth, the four heroes have had practice writing this world's language. But Hiiro had already learned it. He could already write on the level of an average person of this world.

He had always had a good memory, especially in relation to things he was interested in. And books were one of his passions. Though not perfect, Hiiro was able to remember most of everything he wanted to, so he was able to quickly memorize the letters of this world.

“This is....the story of a hero, right?”

Anyway, looking at the cover of the book, there was a picture of a young youth with a sword.

(So books like this get written in this world as well. Let's see, the author is... Marquis Blue Note.) It was not a name he had heard of.

Hiiro turned the page and continued reading. He found that the story had an honestly common setting. The countries each claiming respective authority, and insisting that they were the top of the world. At first, it started as a discussion, and then escalated to war.

The countries fought each other, and people felt the consequences and became impoverished. The world becomes painful. Meanwhile, a young boy unhappy with the situation of the world, and friends who had the same thoughts go to stop the war.

(That's a nice sense of justice, however the world is tough enough to survive through a little war.) As for the person who was called the hero, he was praised, but then killed later.

(...What? They kill off the main character?)

Furthermore, he was killed by the king of the country which called for the hero. In the end, the hero was executed with the crime of killing the daughter of the king. Of course, the hero was completely innocent. However, as the countries were rescued from war, the king envied the fame of the hero who became the symbol of peace and murdered him.

Then, confusion broke out as to who killed the hero, and from that, a new war started, going back the state the world was in before.

(The hero worked so hard, and died a miserable death. He wasn't even rewarded.) But the adventure hadn't ended yet.

(What do you mean by not ended!)

There still things he needed to do. So, he was still left with this mission when he died. Thus, he revived and came back to the world.

The hero searched for a method to return the world to a peaceful state. On his journey, he came across a certain magic. Its power was absolute and could control the world as one desired.

However, his body was lost in the process, and he became just an existence, and could not use the magic. Thus, he decided to wait. Someday, a person will find the hero, and at that time, the hero will revive again, and bring back the peace. First, though, the whole country will be crushed.

(Oi, this Hero gives up quickly.)

I will eliminate all the countries with the bad ideas. Then, the world will be peaceful. A world I would be able to adventure in freely in.

So, the hero continues to wait. Waiting, waiting.

Believing that the hope of light will come someday, he continues to wait.

The Man's name was Tyn Cal Weikl. A man heralded as a Hero.

(This man is definitely broken. But the ones who did it were the country and the world.) Hiiro slammed the book shut.

“And such is the end of a Hero. I definitely don't want to become one.”

The book didn't grant the Hero a happy ending. Though real life can take any sort of turn, a story is just a story. Fiction is just a fabrication.

Even the hero who made peace has many enemies. If you have war, there are people who benefit. Here, there are even some people who wish to fight. And in the midst of it, a young hero attempted to push his selfish ideals of justice onto everyone else.

“Freedom is the best. Don't force yourself to work. Just going with the flow is the best.”

While murmuring this, Hiiro closed his eyes.

“There is the Fried Syrup , Honey Tart , and the Threesome , and also the Honey Sap !”

Max had arranged the Honey Candy on the desk and was pointing to different ones to teach Hihiro how to make them. There were even ones that he had never seen before. Muir is ecstatically looking at all of them.

As expected of a little girl. Arnold gulps as he stares at the honey candies, which are shining like jewels.

“Amu⁸.”

“Why are you already eating!?”

Hihiro starts to eat, and soon after, Arnold joins in. He realizes that his retorts will bear no fruit, so he starts eating as not to lose to Hihiro.

The Fried Syrup was something like honey fried in oil. It had a fierce, new texture, creating a new effect.

The Honey Tart was just a tart covered in honey. It seemed to be Muir’s favorite.

The Threesome was something similar to a pizza, with three different types of honey, the Blue Honey , the Red Honey , and the White Honey , and then topped in different fruits. This appeared to be Arnold’s favorite.

The Honey Sap was a nice finisher. It was made up of a white ball of rice cake, with the honey inside. When it was bitten into, it revealed its true taste. It combined the light taste of cake with the thick flavors of the honey mixed with jam within. This was Hihiro’s favorite.

When the three companions were full, Max asked them what they were going to do from now on.

“Well, our purpose here is done. We also got the honey.”

Hihiro opens up the bag, showing the bottle of honey inside.

“So, you’re leaving soon?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, where are you going?”

“The City of Passion”

“ Beast Capital Passion , hmm... that’s very far.”

Right, the capital was quite far off. It would take around a week by foot.

“Well, there’s no rush to get there.”

“Oh, really? Then today we’ll party ‘til we drop!”

“Yeah!”

Arnold and Max bumped shoulders in high spirits, while Muir stared at them, not sure what to do.

(City of Passion, huh. I would like to see that.) Hihiro looked at the sky through the window.

Beast Capital Passion . This was where the king of the Gabrenth lived. It was made around a big tree and is surrounded by a vast forest. Or rather, you could say that it is the forest.

All the houses and buildings were made of trees. It was truly a Kingdom in harmony with nature.

Meanwhile, a young man was standing on a big branch was looking up the tree. Then, there was a voice from below.

“Hey, don’t climb so far ahead!”

“Come down quickly!”

Two men clad in armor shouted toward the young man.

“Shoot, they found me-nya⁹.”

Reluctantly, the young man jumps off of the branch he was on, surprising the men.

“He jumped off!”

“I-Is he alright?”

They are worrying for nothing. The young man lands stunningly on a branch... or not.

Snap!

The branch broke and the young man crashes into the thicket. The two men hurry towards him.

“Oi, are you okay!?”

While rubbing his head, the young man smiled.

“M-My apologies-nya. But I’m fine.”

“G-Good. That’s good. Now don’t be climbing up that high again, you hear?”

One of the men offers his hand. The young man gladly takes it and gets up.

“Sorry, I just wanted to see the tree that is held so dearly by this country-nya.”

He looks at the large tree from underneath.

“Right. The first King Jingwald saw this tree, and made it the center of his country. It’s sometimes called the Tree of Beginnings .”

“Yeah, this is the first time I’ve visited the Tree of Beginnings, Aragorn -nya.”

“Now that I think about it, you’re an unfamiliar face. Where are you from?”

“Really, really~ far east from here-nya.”

“East... so Kalent ?”

“Even farther-nya.”

“What was there beyond that? Ah, are you from a newly established village or something?”

“Well, something like that.”

The youngster shows off his two white canines as he laughs aloud.

“But kid, how did you climb all the way up there?”

The man stares up at the towering tree as he speaks.

“How? I jumped-nya.”

“Jumped... Well I can see from your ears that you’re of the Were Rabbit tribe. I guess I can be satisfied with that explanation.”

On top of the youngster’s hair, which was as green as the leaves of the trees, was a set of long ears that twitched back and forth.

“Oi, it’s time to change shifts.”

“Ah, is it already that time? Kid, don’t do anything too dangerous.”

“That’s for the warning-nya.”

And after saying that, the two guards left. The youth stares at the giant tree once more.

“It’s quite nice. This city that seems to grow around it.”

He puts on a brown robe, and starts walking away. As he leaves, he stares at the other tree. The dwelling of the king of the Beasts, the King’s Tree .

“I guess it’s time for me to get to work-nya.”

And with the sound of the wind, the young man disappears.

Chapter 26: The Meeting in the Kingdom of Beasts

“Papa!”

“I told you to address me as Father.”

“Please forget about that for now and listen to what I have to say!”

The person having this conversation is a man with a stern lion-like face. This man is in fact the king of the Beast Kingdom – Passion, Leowald King¹⁰.

And the person calling Leowald ‘Papa’ is his blood descendant, Princess Kuclear.

Though her father sported a majestic mane and an intimidating aura, Kuclear was different. The only thing similar between them was her silky, crimson-brown hair, which she kept cut short.

Though her eyes looked a bit sharp, the impression she gave off was one of a young girl loved by all. Perhaps this was due to the influence of her mother Blansa.

She is currently inside of the King’s Tree, interrogating her father. The contents of their conversation...

“Hey, why is it that I am prohibited from going out to war?”

“I’ve said it time and again, but you are still much too young. You haven’t even managed learning the art of Binding yet, right?”

“...Well...that’s true.”

She breaks off eye contact with her father.

“Soon, we will be making preparations for war. We will engage in much bloodshed, and death will run rampant in our ranks.”

“B-But still I am this country’s princess! Do you expect me to stand here while everyone goes off to fight?”

“Exactly.”

“Papa!”

“I don’t have the slightest feeling that we will face defeat, but just in case, I need to make sure that some royal blood stays behind.”

“Does that mean you will be taking all of my brothers with you?”

“Exactly.”

“Ku...”

Kuclear makes a downtrodden face as she clenches her teeth. She can understand her father’s point. If all those of royal blood go into battle and meet their end, then the country will go through turmoil.

That’s why Kuclear is to be left behind while her two brothers go out to war. She can understand that this is for her country’s sake, but still she is unsatisfied by it.

“I-I can’t agree with that! We still have Mimir with us! That child can...”

“What sort of things are you expecting of a 9-year-old?”

“Uu... but...”

Mimir was Kuclear’s younger sister. Of course, she was also a carrier of royal blood, but she was much too young to have a country left to her. Also, she had another problem.

“Though she has my blood, Mimir is facing a difficult problem, isn’t she?”

“T-That’s true, but... That child is very smart. More so than me.”

Leowald steps out of his role as king for a moment, and places his hand on Kuclear’s shoulder.

“You’ve already turned 18. You think more of this country than I do.”

“Papa...”

“Because of that, your brothers and I can go off to fight without worry.”

“...”

“I have no intentions of dying. I’ll slay all of the Evila , and proceed to the Humas . We’ll settle our old debts, and take the country.”

Leowald stares at Kuclear with his piercing eyes.

“But even I...”

Kuclear feels the warmth emanating from her shoulder.

“You are my daughter. The daughter of the Beast King . You may be inexperienced, but I believe you will be a Beastman that stands above all the others.”

“Papa...”

“So while we’re away, I leave this country to you.”

Upon saying this, Leowald nods, and leaves the room without waiting for his daughter’s reply. Kuclear, left behind, stares at her own hands lamenting her lack of power.

“If only I had more power... If only I was strong like my brothers...”

She wanted to fight. She wanted to protect her people, her country and the Gabranth race. But she realizes she doesn't have such power. Kuclear stares at her father's back, muttering to herself how far away he seemed.

A meeting was being held in the King's Tree . Taking his place at the round table, the king Leowald directed his gaze at the people before him.

"Everyone, the time has come."

Upon these words, the eyes of the people listening fill with confidence.

"For a long time, we have faced unjust treatment. The Evila do whatever they please on our land, and the Humas see us as nothing more than slaves. Even now, many of our brethren are suffering."

Everyone gives a firm nod.

"We have finally attained power. We, who have not been granted magic and have lost our racial abilities have gained the strongest art of Binding ! Now is the time for us to bare our fangs, and show those who looked down upon us! And we must teach them! The Beastmen are the beings that will stand upon the heavens!"

"Yeah!"

Strong voices of agreement fill the area. Leowald smiles upon seeing his subordinates' reliability.

"First we must make a proclamation of war! We are different than those Evila who live through betrayal and deceit. We will fight fairly looking our opponents in the eye. And we will win! Such is the pride of the Gabranth people!"

"Yeah!"

"After we declare war, we must march onto enemy land. Of course, we will encounter Evila there... Hunt them without remorse."

Everyone present gives a ferocious smile. They truly do carry the blood of beasts. Their animal instincts, their desire for battle, was inhuman.

"Leglos, did you finish writing up the formal proclamation?"

"Yes, I have written it exactly as you ordered, father."

"Good."

Leglos was Leowald's eldest son. According to his vassals, he did not fall far behind his father in strength, popularity or intimidating atmosphere.

"Then after you send it, I will take my unit into Evila territory."

The person saying this was the second son, Lenion. His face looked closer to that of his mothers. He looked quite similar to Kuclear.

"Understood, but don't let your guard down. Upon receiving our proclamation, they will definitely amass their forces."

"I know. But still I will hunt every last one of them."

He was also a Beastman. His eyes held a deep thirst for blood.

"Does everyone understand? This is war! Our main goal is to win and return home. This is a fight that we cannot risk losing! Everyone, carry your pride as a Beastman as you march into battle! We're aiming for eradication!"

"Yeah!"

"We will begin our march one week from now. Fierce battles await us. Everyone march back to your homes, and spread the word to you kin!"

Everyone nods.

"Then from here on out, we will be increasing our fighting force."

Just above the room Leowald was holding his meeting in, a single youngster was kneeling down with an unpleasant expression on his face.

"Ah, this has become quite serious-nya."

It seems he has heard the contents of the meeting. His ears twitch as he begins to think to himself.

"I never thought that things would proceed this quickly-nya. What should I do?"

He scratches his face as he ponders the future. His ears twitch once more.

"...Okay, nothing out of the ordinary here."

A soldier-seeming Beastman approached the area, but found no one there. The youngster had quickly left the area.

And when the coast was clear...

“That was close-nya. If I get caught, it wouldn’t be funny-nya.”

He says as he quietly returns to the place he was before. He had jumped and grabbed a higher branch on the tree when he sensed the soldier’s approach.

This is the King’s Tree . It has thousands upon thousands of ridiculously thick branches extending in every direction. And carved on the insides of them are various rooms and passageways.

“For now, I guess I should deliver the message-nya.”

He looks over the town before the tree with a solemn expression.

“They made such a peaceful kingdom, yet they go to all the trouble of destroying it-nya.”

The youngster looks up at the sky.

Chapter 27: A Slice of Their Travels

Hiiro's party set Beast Capital Passion as their destination and began their journey. They were not walking.

"To think there was such a convenient vehicle in this world."

Hiiro's party sat on a vehicle... an animal. It had an appearance like that of an ostrich, but it was several times larger, and it had a small chair strapped to its back.

"That's right! I really owe Max something now."

As they were leaving Doggam, Max appeared with it. Apparently, this bird was an essential item for crossing the vast, rugged terrain of the Beast Continent.

The animal was called a Raidpic¹¹, and it was a beast that was able to run while carrying its owner on its back.

Arnold's Raidpic had two seats placed on it, so Muir was riding next to him.

"At this speed, we'll be able to arrive at our destination several times faster than planned, right?"

"Yeah! But this'll take a bit of time to get used to."

Just as Muir said, in a world without suspension, the seats put an uncomfortable amount of pressure on a certain part of the body when the birds' body bobbed up and down.

"Right, right. I thought my ass would split in half! Right, Muir?"

"D-Don't bring me into this!"

Yes, her butt did hurt, but Arnold needed to learn some delicacy. By the way, Hiiro had no such problems in that area.

This was because he had written the character Soft on it, giving it a texture similar to a sofa. Of course, he did not reveal this fact to the others and monopolized it for himself. Otherwise, Arnold would get mad.

At that moment, the Raidpic began decelerating. When the group looked around for the reason, they found that they were surrounded by several frog-shaped monsters.

"Great! It's been a while since I've been able to fight!"

Arnold appeared to be ready to jump out of his seat. However, Hiiro felt that getting up, defeating the monsters, and getting back on would be a pain, so he began concentrating magic on his finger.

Bang!

“W-What was that!?”

The cause of Arnold’s surprise was a sudden explosion in front of his mount. No one in the group could use fire magic, and he couldn’t sense anyone else around them.

But it was clear that some magic was used.

“Let’s go.”

Hihiro was the only one who stayed calm.

“You did something, didn’t you?”

“Who knows?”

Though Arnold was sure that Hihiro had done something, Hihiro simply ignored him. Though the Raidpic was surprised, it quickly confirmed that the enemies around it were gone, and cautiously proceeded forwards.

(Yeah, Word Magic is needlessly useful.)

The word he used was Burst, and its effect was just as it sounds. Its firepower was considerable, and a single shot was enough to take the lives of several monsters. But as it also effected the caster, it was best to cast from afar.

Holding the book Max gave him in one hand, Hihiro read while enjoying his ride. Contrarily, Arnold felt annoyed while looking at him.

“...Hey, Muir?”

“What?”

“That guy... About that chair he’s using...”

“Y-Yeah?”

“Doesn’t it look a bit soft?”

“D...Does it?”

Arnold got up and tapped the bottom of his chair to confirm that it was rock hard. However, Hihiro’s chair seemed to sink under his weight. The back rest was the same.

(This is strange... My instincts are telling me something's wrong. Is this extremely condescending feeling I'm getting from him my imagination?...) It wasn't his imagination, but eventually, Arnold sat down without coming to any conclusions.

The day came to a close, and the group set up camp. Though he was already used to it, the youth of the modern era did not particularly enjoy camping outdoors.

He often witnessed unknown animals and insects, and he worried whether or not they carried any pathogens.

But even if he got infected, he would be able to deal with it with his Word Magic , so it wasn't a particularly pressing matter.

(But this sticky feeling I'm getting all over my body is unforgivable.) As he thought that, he wrote a word on his body. The word was Clean , and with it, the filth and sweat clinging to his body vanished.

(Yes, though I always use it, the feeling is quite refreshing.) The feeling of having your body instantly cleaned through magic was like putting your full body into a bath.

“What are you doing?”

He was found by a troublesome person.

“Nothing.”

“It can't be nothing. I saw it! You used magic and then got a refreshed look on your face! Say it! Spill it out!”

Hihiro sighed at the bothersome display.

“Also, don't underestimate a Beastman's nose! The smell of sweat on you has disappeared! What does this mean?”

Arnold pushed his finger at Hihiro's face, so Hihiro grabbed it.

Twist...

“OOWWW! What the hell do you think you're doing!? Are you a devil!?”

“Don't point your finger at me, Perverted Demon.”

“I got another nickname, how wonderful. You really need to stop bullshitting with me!”

He began stomping his foot on the floor. While he was doing so, Muir came over.

“I’m also a little curious too. What did you do?”

Hihiro found himself being stared at by two innocent eyes. Though he got the slight feeling that they were hiding something.

“...*Sigh* You really are troublesome people.”

Hihiro sighed deeply and stared at Muir with an expression as if he had given up.

“Come here for a second.”

“Eh?”

“Don’t worry about it, just get over here.”

“O-Okay.”

Muir decided to follow Hihiro’s words and walked towards him. Then Hihiro took ahold of her hand.

“AAH! Don’t go around touching her hand! Are they that soft and cute? Father won’t forgive you!”

“Shut it, Criminal Wannabe.”

“Gu...”

As Arnold stared at the scene, he noticed that Muir’s body began to glow lightly. And then, just as with Hihiro, her scent disappeared.

“This somehow feels nice.”

Muir’s face was a little flushed, and she looked dizzy. Hihiro had Clean ed her as well. It seems the same feeling came over her as well.

“O-Oi, Muir?”

Arnold called out, a little worried about her.

“It’s amazing! Oji-san, Hihiro’s magic made me feel great!”

“Eh? Is that so? I see, so as I thought, you used magic to wash yourself. Now then, please do me too.”

“Not happening.”

“Why!?”

“Because the chibi is a woman, for argument’s sake.”

“A-Argument’s sake?”

Hihiro’s laconic speech put Muir in shock.

“The old man is already tainted. Trying to clean you now is a bit...”

“Don’t look at me with such eyes of pity! And I’m not that dirty!”

Arnold continued to shout, and Hiiro had had enough. He had anticipated this, so he released the Sleep he had started writing a while ago at him, and Arnold suddenly collapsed to the ground.

“Eh? U-Um what did you do?”

“I put him to sleep. He was being loud. You should go to sleep soon too.”

“O-Okay.”

While pitying Arnold in her mind, Muir quickly fell asleep while encircled by the comforting feeling of Hiiro’s magic.

Hiiro confirmed that Muir had fallen asleep, and he left the campground alone. But, he didn’t go too far.

(Now then, I guess I should continue testing out things today. Ah right, I haven’t tested Parallel Writing or synergistic effects yet.) He concentrated magic into his finger. At that moment, he saw a light appear some distance away.

“What is that?”

He decided to go check it out. He found himself on top of a hill and surrounding him were many small lights dancing around the scenery.

(Fireflies? No, they’re too big for that.)

He concentrated his eyes and tried to make out the finer details of the lights. There were small figures inside of them.

(Oi, could those be...)

They were shaped like Humans, but two wings sprouted from their back. They let out a faint trail of light as they flew freely through the sky.

“... Pheom ?”

Chapter 28: Fairy Garden

I gasped in surprise. Did they notice me? Crap. In an instant, the lights stopped moving.

(Those are Pheom ... right?)

They looked like straight out of a picture book. The four of them floated over, each with a different hair color. Red, blue, yellow and green.

“Hey! Hey! Gabranth ! Wait no, Humas . Were you watching us? You were weren’t you!?”

“So what Pheom ? Quit yapping about it.”

“This is different from what mother told us!”

“Yeah! Humas shouldn’t be able to see us!”

(How annoying... they buzz around your face, chatter endlessly. But there’s one thing that bothers me.)

“You. How did you know that I wasn’t a Gabranth ?”

(Right now, I should be disguised as a Gabranth , heck even they couldn’t tell me apart. Yet these Pheom saw through it instantly!) “Wow! It’s talking! It can really see us!”

For some reason the red one seems overjoyed...

“Anyways, answer me! How could you tell?”

“Huh?!? Cause it’s not the real thing? I guess.”

With a blank look, she answers my question.

“Real?!? What do you mean?”

“Kyahaha! Humas , you seriously don’t know?”

The yellow one seems to be enjoying itself.

“Interesting! How interesting!”

“I’ll tell you! It’s cause we’re Pheom ! The all-seeing race!”

Now you’re talking...

“All-seeing race? What does that mean?”

“Kyahaha! He doesn’t know! He really doesn’t know!”

The red one is still flying, trying to mimic me. The green one continues...

“Our eyes see only the truth!”

“...So you can see the true form of anyone?”

“Ooo! AMAZING! So good!”

The blue one’s laughing again... I’m seriously considering using to make him fall.

“Anyways, that’s how we know.”

The yellow one nods. I really would prefer to speak one on one with him right now.

The red one approaches me.

“Hmmm. This being... is it really a Humas ? Really?”

“WHAT! Isn’t it?”

“He certainly looks like one...”

“Maybe he’s different?”

“Well I don’t know, he feels different from the rest of them.”

The red one smacks his hand.

“I know! Mother might know!”

“I see!”

“Are we going?”

“Are you sure about this?”

Hiiro sighs.

“Alright! Let’s go!”

ZUZUZUZUZUZUZUZUZU

In front of them, a rift opens up.

“What in the world?”

The rift widens, to the size of a person. Nothing but darkness can be seen inside.

“This way to mother! Let’s go!”

“He... hey!”

The red one pulls his hand.

(Who is this mother they speak of? But seriously... aren’t these guys being too trusting right now?) (It seems that these Pheom aren’t very bright. Are their heads alright?) (However, this piques my

interest. You never know, I might find something interesting!) Hiiro stepped into the rift.

“Huh!?!”

The Pheom let out a light which penetrates the darkness. The interior looks like a part of the forest, but there are countless lights floating about.

A house. A tiny house. As small as a dollhouse.

(I feel like I've stepped into Lilliput...) “Over here!”

The red one pulls him over. A massive, hollowed out tree comes into view, and a woman appears.

She isn't tiny like the rest of them. Light blue hair, long enough as to reach the ground. Her hair shines. On her head rests some sort of a crown. Wings on her back. Slender features. She looks just like a goddess.

Holding a cane, with a glowing orb with feathers on top, she announces.

“Welcome traveler! To Fairy Garden .”

“Thanks for inviting me, though I was pretty much forced to come.”

The red one stuck out it's tongue.

“Orun has a good eye. I don't think she would bring an enemy.”

Apparently, she trusts me.

“Hey! Hey! Mother!”

“Yes dear?”

“This person, is he really a Humas ?”

“No. He comes from another world. He isn't from the world of Edea .”

The surrounding fairies raised their voices as if impressed. Hiiro smiled.

“By the way, are you behaving as I've asked? He is a visitor, show some courtesy will you?”

Orun is being scolded. Ha! Serves you right.

“Anyways! Let me introduce myself properly. I am the head of the Pheom , Niño. If you would so kind as to tell us your name?”

“Arnold Ocean.”

Niño laughs.

“...Hiiro Okumura. I look forward to working with you.”

I reluctantly lower my head.

(*I see... they can even see through lies.*) My fake name was seen through instantly. I wanted to make sure, but her ability really is amazing. This sort of deception doesn't even faze her.

"By all means Hero, follow me."

We entered the tree. There was a fairly large space. Some snacks had been prepared for us.

"This food is called Vanyar ."

It was shaped like a flower, and sparkled in my hands. There was a squishy thing on top.

(*Is this... gelatin?*)

But I can't eat it just yet. It might be poisoned. I start writing under the desk.

"Rest assured. We aren't trying to poison you."

"..."

"And please stop writing under the desk."

It feels like they have eyes everywhere.

"Why should I believe you?"

"Well then!"

She takes the Vanyar and eats it.

"Of course, we haven't put anything in the drink either."

Or so you say... I frown.

"Quite paranoid, aren't you?"

"Of course. I'm on my own right now. Isn't that expected?"

"Well... how about you check for yourself?"

"...What?!?"

"Use your Word Magic ."

Hiiro froze. He knew that they had the ability to 'see', but he hadn't expected their 'vision' to be this powerful.

"Our power is the ability to see everything. Of course, that includes the Status as well."

By seeing my Status , one would be able to find out about my Word Magic . But even then...

(*Word Magic is quite strong.*)

I let magic flow into my finger.

“If you don’t mind...”

The word he wrote was Pry . And so, Niño’s status appeared before him.

(This power is seriously OP.)

NIÑO		Lv. 20	
HP:	100/100	ATK:	20
MP:	1000/1000	DEF:	30
		AGL:	50
EXP:	10000	HIT:	100
NEXT:	1000	INT:	300400
Magic Attributes Fire, Water, Light			
Magic Fireball Fire, Attack, Mystic Flare Fire, Attack, Mist Water, Support, Bubble Rain Water, Attack/Support, Infinity Judgement Light, Attack, Lazer Prism Light, Attack, Holy Lance Light, Attack, Resurrection Light, Recovery, Full Clean Light, Effect			
Titles Fairy Queen, Seer, One who sees, Light Guardian.			

Chapter 29: One Night's Experience

Using `Pry` to view her status, he found that lies would definitely not work on her. This power seemed to be able to see inside one's heart as well, and it was quite a high-class word, though its effects could be improved if he could imagine the effects better.

“So do you believe me now?”

“...A little...”

“That's unfortunate.”

She found the fact that she couldn't completely gain his trust a bit unfortunate, but she was delighted when she saw him cram the `Vanyar` into his mouth one after the other.

The `Vanyar` were tastier than he had expected, he thought as he ate them. They felt like gummies to the touch, but they somehow made him want to stuff them into his mouth.

(It's that. Once you start, you can never stop. That sort of thing.) In Japan, he had often faced the same problem with small candies. After you finish one, you find yourself reaching for another, and eventually you can't stop eating them. The taste came in many varieties, so it was impossible to get tired of it.

“Please partake in that `Melnym` as well.”

Hihiro gazed at the white, milk-like drink inside of his cup. Its smell was reminiscent of peaches. He took a sip.

(I see. It's a sweet, refreshing juice. But, it tastes more like apple than peach.) He was able to determine that it was some sort of fruit juice. He had no idea what it was made out of, but it was the type of drink you'd want to enjoy when you get out of the bath.

“Is it to your liking?”

“Well, it's not bad.”

“Fufu. That's good.”

She held her hands together and smiled as if she were a little girl. Her appearance was that of an adult woman in her late 20s, but when she smiled, she let out a youthful aura.

“But it seems like I've been ignoring the `Humas` for too long. For them to even be able to use summoning magic now.”

“But in order to summon the Heroes, it seems they made their own princesses into sacrifices. It's an idiotic concept.”

That was one of the reasons Hihiro wanted to leave the country as soon as possible. No matter the reason, he didn't want to serve a king who would kill off his own daughters.

"...Why do you not act with the other summoned ones?"

"Ah? Of course it's because I don't want to. Why must I bury my own will and listen to another's foolish orders?"

"..."

Hihiro's speech seemed to have hit something.

"Anyways, why do I have to travel and work with people I don't like. There's no way that would be any fun."

"Fufufu. I see. So does that mean that you consider the people you're traveling with right now to be your comrades, at least?"

"No, they just have their uses, so I just happen to be with them."

"Fufufu. Is that so? So from now on, you will never fight for the sake of the Humas race?"

"And I'm asking why I have to go out of my way to break my back for that country. Can't those people sort out their own problems on their own?"

Niño narrowed her eyes and stared at Hihiro.

"Then what would you do if the ones at your side right now were to be injured?"

"I told you, didn't I? I'm merely with them because they have their uses."

"I... see."

"...Well, while I don't love it, we're together for now. If something cruel and unfair happens to them before my eyes, then I'll take the appropriate measures. However, if they bring misfortune onto me with their own carelessness, I have no obligation to stay."

"...You are a strange person. Perhaps you would call this tactlessness? Or maybe honesty?"

"Is that so? A majority of people only care about themselves, don't they? But they care about those watching them and public opinion, so they act like they're doing things for others. Wanting to become strong is never a desire for the sake of others. It's because you don't want your comrades to die and leave you alone. You become strong for yourself."

"T-That sure is a twisted thought process."

Of course, as it was his own mind, Hihiro did not think it was twisted in the slightest.

"I've decided to do the things I like for myself. If someone tries to unjustly take my things away, then I won't forgive them. If they don't involve themselves with me, then I won't bother them. Generally, I just don't have any interest in others."

“...I see. You sure are an interesting person.”

She held her hand to her mouth and laughed.

“By the way, why can’t the others see Pheom ? The red one said something like that.”

“Hmm? Isn’t it because the others aren’t interested?”

“...You were that sort of character?”

Worrying that her true character was leaking out, Niño once again narrowed her eyes at Hihiro.

“Fufufu, I was a little mean in my wording. I apologize. About your previous question, in order to detect our existence, one requires a high level of magic. But that’s not all. It’s also based on the nature of the beholder.”

“Nature?”

“Yes, the people who talk about communicating with Spirits and Fairies are beings of similar constitution.”

“Wait a second. I’m human, and I have no wings.”

“That isn’t what I meant.”

Ah good. He was worried about what he would do if wings suddenly sprouted.

“We are a sort of existence that lives more in the world of the mind than the physical world.”

“The mind?”

“Yes. We’re a race heavily linked to magic. We definitely do have a physical body, but those are mostly vessels to house our magic.”

“I see. Is that why the Fairies all had similar appearances?”

The only difference was their hair color, and other than that, they were pretty much identical. If their hair was of the same color, Hihiro felt that he wouldn’t be able to distinguish them. It was as if they were identical twins.

“Yes, to say our physical body is but a costume... may be an overstatement, but to the Pheom , there is no point in having differing physical forms. The Fairies are especially similar.”

“And? Since you’re mostly an existence made of magic, it’s hard for humans to see you? Then why is there such difficulty for Humas alone? The Gabranth don’t have much magic either, right?”

“That’s because the Gabranth were existences close to us from the start. They love nature, live alongside it and die by its law. That environment has caused them to develop a nature that is able to perceive us.”

It was an answer Hihiro was satisfied with. It’s something that could be seen from looking at the difference between the Humas and Gabranth continents. The Beastmen greatly valued nature. He had

confirmed it from the sky.

The Humas were instead gifted with wisdom. They used nature and altered it to make their own lives easier.

However, as always, the Beastmen continued to live among nature. And it was that decision that allowed them to develop a nature that could see the Pheom.

“But why could I see them?”

“That’s because of your naturally high magic and because your soul is similar to ours.”

“Hmm... Anyways, I should see it as an advantage, right?”

“Um... Perhaps?”

“I mean it’s like that, right? I can do some things that other humans can’t. Talent truly is an unfair concept.”

“...Fufufu.”

“Why do you laugh?”

“No, I just found it interesting that there were people like you among the humans as well. I understand Orun’s interest in you.”

“I don’t really care, but...”

“Yes?”

“Seconds please.”

Saying that, Hihiro held out his plate. Somehow, the mountain of Vanyar had vanished.

“Fufufu, you eat well.”

For a while, they continued to talk and exchange questions. And eventually, Hihiro said it was time for him to return.

Niño made a gate-like thing, linking him back to the hill he was on.

“Ah, please wait! Please wait!”

And suddenly, Orun came flying over. The other three were with her.

“You’re returning there, right? Right?”

“Y-Yeah.”

Her habit of repeating her last line twice was getting annoying.

“I give you this! Give you this!”

What was handed over was a ring.

“What’s this?”

“Fufu. That seems to be a Faerie Ring . It’s a sign that you’ve received the trust of the Faeries . Orun was pleased with her first meeting with a human. If you’d like, I want you to accept it.”

“Well, I’ll take what’s given to me.”

Perhaps it could be sold for a quite bit, he thought to himself. But he definitely wouldn’t say that out loud.

“And this is from me.”

Niño produced a mass of magic like the one he had seen from the old fortune teller, and she pushed it into his chest.

“O-Oi, this is?”

He was a little shaken as he asked.

“That’s a gift that links you here. It will let us meet again.”

“W-Wait a second! I don’t really want—”

“The talk was very interesting.”

“Bye bye! Bye bye!”

“I-I’m not coming back.”

“Ah, and if you happen to meet the Spirit King , make sure to give him my regards.”

“S-Spirit? What are you ta—”

And the space around Hiiro twisted, and he was enveloped by darkness. By the time he came to his senses, he was on top of the hill again. And...

“It’s... already morning.”

It seems he stayed up all night. He grimaced from the bright sunrise as he stood still for a while.

Chapter 30: Rumors of War

“Oi, Hihiro! What did you do to your face?”

“Seriously...”

“What happened? You’ve got bags under your eyes.”

“Shut it.”

I grumbled at Arnold. I couldn’t get a wink of sleep last night, or even practice my Word Magic .

I certainly gained some valuable experience, but it feels like various things are being pushed onto me. Terribly annoying. But above all, I’m tired.

“That reminds me Hihiro. Yesterday, were you talking to someone? Anything important?”

“If you keep bothering me, I’ll seriously stab you.”

“...Sheesh.”

Frankly, you’re way too honest. It feels like the only thing keeping you alive now is God. And that’s just cause he’s in a good mood.

“Anyways, I’m gonna take a nap. If anything happens, don’t bother me.”

I hopped onto the Raidpic and started snoring.

“...It can’t be helped, we’ll travel slowly.”

“Of course you will!”

The party traveled towards Passion on the Raidpic. We passed by what seemed to be a town, but since we had enough food, and since Hihiro was asleep, we decided to skip it.

“At this rate, we’ll arrive in Passion pretty soon.”

Since the Raidpic’s speed exceeded my expectations, we’ll be arriving sooner than expected. However, my ass still hurts.

“Woah! A demon?”

A demon came into view. It looked similar to a rhino.

“That’s a Funsai demon. It’s not worth the effort, but whatever.”

“Is.. is everything alright?”

“If anything happens, wake up the sleeping beauty over there.”

“O... okay...”

Arnold got off the Raidpic. With his broadsword sheathed on his back, he advanced. The Funsai charged.

“Let’s go! Wind Fang !”

Wind coiled around his blade. He spun his sword in big arcs, finally swinging down on the Funsai.

Bushaaaaa-tsu!

“Haha! Witness my Binding ! I’ll send you to hell!”

Arnold waved his sword around, shaking off the blood, and returned to Muir.

“Welcome back Oji-san.”

“Easy victory!”

“But Oji-san’s still amazing...”

Muir was worried.

“You’re strong, you can use Binding . Unlike me...”

Arnold patted Muir’s head.

“Don’t sell yourself short! When I was just like you, I didn’t know if I was strong enough either.”

“...”

“However, when you do get stronger, don’t get cocky!”

“Oji-san...”

“Even I started out as merely a slave. Only later did I get stronger.”

It was supposed to be a dark story. But he said it with a smile.

“I used to cry for help, but now I want to become stronger. Just like you!”

“...”

“Do you think that you’re weaker than other Gabranth ? C’mon! You have ‘that’ family’s blood. Moreover you’re ‘his’ daughter.”

“...Okay.”

“Let’s get stronger together. Once we settle down in Passion , we’ll go through training together!”

“Re... really?”

Muir’s face brightened, and she nodded.

“Ah! Don’t try to become ridiculously strong! I can’t have you beating me can I?!?”

“Thank you Oji-san!”

As Arnold patted her head. They looked just like family.

“By the way, is that guy still sleeping?”

“W... well...”

The two were amazed that he was still sleeping soundly.

A few days later.

“Soon! We’re already at Rintenbu .”

Arnold then explained.

“ Rintenbu is a town near Passion .”

“It’s where Werecats live.”

We’ll spend the night here and arrive in Passion tomorrow. In fact, since we’re so close, it’ll only take us another day considering the Raidpick’s pace.

“It’s been a while since I’ve slept in a proper bed.”

Hihiro declared that being homeless was boring. He hadn’t read a book in a while and was looking forward to one.

As they continued moving, the town came into view.

“It’s the Werecat city of Rintenbu !”

As expected, the town was located in a forest, the size was impressive. I tethered the horse on the outskirts of the town. Muir reminds me to feed it. Arnold told us to head to the general store first.

Upon entering the town, we saw crowds of Werecats . Of course, there were also other kinds of beastmen. Travelers like us, merchants. As expected, many people visited the town of the Werecats .

(However, I did not like this for it reminded me of Nekomimi and Japan. I don’t have a fetish for this stuff. I’m not an old man. That reminds me. What race do the old man and Pipsqueak belong to? I would say...) Animal ears and tails, pretty standard features. Though there are some beastmen who have paws. Arnold told me to try touching them. Apparently being stroked feels pleasant.

More importantly, Hihiro was worried. He had a troubled expression on his face. It seems that Arnold also noticed. Arnold was wondering whether or not to ask about it when he entered the store.

“Wh... what!?!?”

Upon entering the store, he heard the news. It seemed that the inhabitants were returning injured.

“Wha... w... WAR!?!”

Arnold was startled. The shopkeeper nodded.

“Ah, though I don’t think they’ll be marching tomorrow. Towards the border that is.”

Hihiro was surprised. He had only heard rumors. While there was certainly tension between the races. A war was a sick joke. He didn’t think that *Passion* would start moving so soon.

“A bunch of young men volunteered to go.”

The volunteers who went out were in high spirits. But many of them had yet to experience war.

“Have you not heard the rumors about this town?”

On the way here, there were some towns and villages, we passed them since we had enough food. It seems we missed some important information.

“Bu... but! A war... will the Evila fight? Is it alright to leave the kingdom completely undefended?”

Arnold was concerned. Although large, *Passion* did not have much war potential. Marching to their enemies was basically suicide.

“No, those are just rumors. Not all the soldiers have been deployed.”

“I see... they’ll gather more troops along the way.”

Hihiro nodded.

“I can only pray for their well being.”

“Th... that’s..”

Arnold was shocked. He had gone through much trouble to return to his homeland, only to find it on the brink of war.

“What will you do?”

“What should I do... I’ll head to *Passion* . There’s someone I must see.”

“I see. I’ll head to the inn and buy a few things.”

Arnold will go to *Passion* to get some information. Nothing shocking. He’ll arrive at his destination. What should I do now?

“Oh yeah, is there a guild hall ahead??”

We arrived at the guild hall and registered for a party of three. In addition to earning more EXP, you can also take on higher level quests.

However, there was a pleasant surprise awaiting Hihiro. When he got his card back, he found that the frame had turned pink. Proof of a B rank.

Hihiro, Arnold and Muir were all surprised. I guess it's cause he defeated the Red Boar? Since he defeated an S-rank demon alone, his rank had jumped up.

But still, to go from D rank to B rank, Arnold was terribly sad to learn that he had been one-upped. Delighted, Hihiro showed off his new card.

There was also a tremendous bounty on the Red Boar. Hihiro's card had been updated.

Name: Hihiro Okamura

Sex: Male

Age: 17

Race: Human

From: Unknown

Quest:

Rank: B

Equipment

▪ Weapon: Piercer

▪ Guard: Red Robe

▪ Accessory: Fairy Ring

Rigin: 3,869,000

He chuckled at having become a millionaire.

The three exited the guild hall and went to the inn. They would spend the night here and head to Passion tomorrow.

Chapter 31: The Four Heroes' Strength, and Premonitions of War

"I see, the Gabranth are finally moving."

The king of Royal Capital Victorious, Rudolf van Strauss Arclaim had a somber expression on his face.

He had just heard the news from his office—the state of affairs in the country. The Gabranth had finally declared war on the Evila. Of course, he had expected this, but the Gabranth's speed had surprised him.

"Is that so... it seems the world is on the brink of chaos."

"Training a Hero at a time like this is absolutely necessary to raise our war potential for the upcoming battle."

The minister was Dennis Norman. Dennis had also served the previous king.

"Hopefully, they'll both fall together, then we can seize power."

"That seems unlikely... the way the Gabranth are, defeat is inevitable. The Evila are quite strong."

"Especially those Cruel, the elite serving directly under the Demon Lord. Fighting against them is insane. Each of them is said to be able to fight thousands at once."

"No, those are rather the Gabranth's Three Warriors. They are beyond the Cruel. Someone who could stand against them..."

"The Beast King?"

"Yeah, if it's him, even the Cruel could be defeated. However, he's only one person. There are few things one can accomplish alone."

Really, no matter how strong one is, there's no way you can win a war alone.

"If they come up with good strategies, couldn't it work? They aren't foolish enough as to fight a losing war."

"True. They may have a plan, but it doesn't change the fact that the Evila are stronger."

Rudolf folded his arms with a stern expression.

"Hypothetically speaking... if the Gabranth were to win... what would happen?"

"I wonder. The animosity between the Humas and Gabranth runs deep."

“What about if the Evila win?”

“Hey, shouldn’t we check the authenticity of ‘those’ letters?”

“Ah, those letters we’ve been receiving for a while now. Since last year. But as we couldn’t determine their real intentions, we’ve been leaving them alone.”

“...”

“If that letter is indeed genuine, I doubt they plan on wiping out the Gabranth.”

“That’s just wishful thinking.”

“Assuming it is fake, they will exterminate them... right?”

“Whether it’s forged or not, the chances are quite high. Since we don’t know anything about the new Demon Lord, we should probably remain as spectators in this war.”

“Either way, we still have our trump card.”

“In the meantime, let’s wait for more news. Their country might get shaky, but I’ll leave you to deal with it.”

“Yessir!”

The citizens will surely start hearing talk of war. They’ll probably get anxious then. But he thought that letting the minister deal with them would suffice.

“Speaking of which, where are the Heroes right now?”

“At Buckstorm Pass, with Vale.”

“Woah, doesn’t a Dragon live there? They’ve gotten quite strong...”

“They must become stronger. For our sake.”

“...”

“To your right Chika!”

“Got it!”

The Heroes were facing a group of demons. Taishi had sheathed his sword and was firing off blasts of magic. Meanwhile, Chika, with her quick movements, was cutting them apart.

The other two, Shuri and Shinobu, were supporting them from behind.

“ Green Bind !”

The magic Shuri cast was Wind Binding . The demons were bound, swept up, then dropped.

“ Accel !”

Using lightning magic, Taishi and Chika’s movements sped up.

“Yaaaargh!”

“Chaaaaaarge!”

With their increased movement speed, they continued to hack and slash at the demons. In a matter of seconds, the battle was over.

Clap clap clap clap

“An excellent job everyone!”

That was Vale. He had only just been teaching them combat the other day, but there was no need for it anymore. He doubted he could win against the offensive-type Taishi and Chika in a head-on fight.

“As expected of Heroes! Those B-rank demons didn’t stand a chance!”

“Haha, are we really that strong?”

Grinning, Taishi scratched his head.

“Hey! Don’t get cocky. Didn’t you get careless the other day and take some damage?”

“Ah, haha... did that happen?”

He replied, glaring at Chika.

“Still, we’ve really gotten stronger!”

“Right, but are we going for the real thing now?”

Shinobu stared at Vale. Vale nodded with a serious expression.

“Errr... anyways, after this is the Buckstorm Dragon . Rank S... A formidable foe.”

Taishi laughed to break the tension.

“Alright! Rest up, we’re finally going to fight it!”

Everyone answered Taishi. Using potions, they restored their HP and MP and began to ascend the pass. They had heard that no more monsters could be found beyond that point, as they were all scared away by the dragon.

Upon reaching the top, they found a sleeping dragon. Taishi glanced at Vale. He nodded quietly. They had

found the Buckstorm Dragon .

It was massive. Its scales were green, sharp claws, with two giant wings on its back. In addition, its mouth was huge. Dragons were known for their Breath Attack .

Trying to catch it off guard, they quickly cast offensive magic. However the dragon had noticed them. It opened its eyes, startling them.

The dragon opened its mouth and sent out a gigantic sphere of compressed air. Breath Attack . Most of their attacks were swept away. Only a few were able to reach its body, but it still did quite a bit of damage.

“Let’s go Chika!”

“Got it!”

The two of them drew their swords and jumped to the front line.

“ Accel !”

Shinobu instantly raised their speed.

“Haaaa!”

They slashed the dragon.

Bushuuu

Blood sprayed out of the wound.

“Dammit! Too shallow!”

“Me too!”

It’s scales were quite thick, so their attacks weren’t very effective. The dragon, enraged, took to the skies and charged at them.

“ Water Wall !”

Shuri’s water magic managed to protect them. However, the dragon fired off another Breath Attack . Shuri’s magic was dispelled and the two in the rear were sent tumbling.

“Shuri! Shinobu!”

Taishi cried out, but—

“Focus Taishi!”

Chika warned him, this time the dragon slashed at them with it’s claws. Fortunately, they managed to scramble away in time.

“Shit! Eat this! Thunder Break !”

A blast of lightning flashed toward the dragon. Hitting it with a loud crackling sound. The dragon cried out in pain.

“It looks like magic is more effective than our swords!”

“Oh! Then next is this! Flame Lance !”

“Me too! Flame Lance !”

The two spears combined into one and hit the dragon, burning it.

“Gaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Crying out in pain, it tumbled onto the ground.

“Alright! Now!”

The two rushed forward to deal the finishing blow. But the dragon opened its mouth. Breath Attack !

“Crap!”

At that moment,

“ Green Bind !”

“ Paralyze !”

Two shouts came from behind them. Shuri and Shinobu. The girls’ magic succeeded in stopping the dragon.

“Guys! Attack now!”

Taishi and Chika nodded at each other. They focused their magic on their hands. And...

“ LIGHT ARROW !!!”

They thrust their fists forward, letting out of a burst of light which turned into an arrow. The arrow pierced through the dragon’s body. After letting out a shrill cry, the dragon died.

“Whooooo!”

Taishi and the other three cheered. Though they weren’t hurt, the release of tension from their battle caused them to sit down.

Though they had certainly gotten stronger, it was inevitable to receive high damage front a direct attack. Thanks to their experience, they were able to continue fighting.

“Though there were a few close calls, you performed magnificently!”

Vale was quite ecstatic.

“Alright, let’s get the drops and head back.”

When they approached the body, a shadow fell upon them.

“What?!?”

When they looked up, they saw a shadow descending toward the dragon. Vale’s face paled.

“W-Who are you?!?”

Taishi shouted. The figure crossed his arms, and opened his mouth.

“I’ll be taking this.”

With that, the man unfolded what appeared to be his wings. He couldn’t be human. He was clearly a birdman.

“Wait a second! We’re the ones who defeated it!”

The person stripped the dragon of its scales and tossed them their way. He glanced at them, as if saying ‘With this there should be no complaints’. His attitude filled him with the same rage he had against ‘that’ classmate.

“Aaah, argh! Anyways, don’t just do as you please! Give us a reason, you!”

When Taishi raised his finger, Vale calmed him down.

“Taishi-sama! Stop!”

“W-What are you doing, Vale!”

“It’s fine! We got what we wanted. Don’t mind him.”

Seeing the two arguing, the birdman grabbed the tail of the dragon and lifted off. Flying away with the entire dragon.

“A-Amazing. The dragon’s massive.”

As Shuri was saying, he was holding the dragon in one hand. In addition to his vice-like grip, the strength of his wings was spectacular. Every time the wings moved, a gale could be felt below.

And like that, the birdman disappeared into the sky.

“...Hey, Vale, he’s gone, but are you okay with that?”

“I-It’s fine. Right now, you wouldn’t stand a chance against him.”

Seeing Vale sweating bullets, Shinobu asked.

“By any chance, is that Bird-san strong?”

“...Yes, that was Bird, and as you can see he is a Birdman .”

“Well, anyone would be able to tell at a glance that he was a Gabranth.”

“Why didn’t we fight him? Wasn’t it 5 on 1?”

Taishi’s question was natural. They had managed to defeat the S-rank dragon. In addition, Vale was with them, they should be able to defeat Bird. However, Vale shook his head.

“There are many factors. That beastman is unlike any other.”

“What do you mean?”

“He is one of Passion’s Three Warriors . He serves directly under the King. If we fight, the Gabranth will not stay silent.”

“Th... that guy was from the top brass?”

“Yes... and I’m afraid his power exceeds ours... He should be at least Rank SS. I’m sorry, but we wouldn’t last a minute against him. And besides...”

“Besides?”

Vale put on a difficult expression and closed his eyes, as if hesitant to say it. Then, he slowly opened his mouth.

“The fact that he’s gathering monsters means... the war has started.”

They were stunned. Finally, Shinobu asked.

“W-War? Are they going to attack us?”

“When I first saw him, I thought so. However, he didn’t show any signs of aggression.”

Vale looked up.

“If they were waging war on the Humas, he would have finished us off here. There’s no reason to let us live.”

“So you’re saying...?”

“Yes, their enemy is the Evila. They are moving faster than expected.”

Taishi was told that the Gabranth would soon be waging war against the Evila.

However, the King had said that there was still some time. But in fact, it would start soon.

“C-Couldn’t this be a misunderstanding, Vale?”

Taishi asked. But Vale shook his head.

“No. Do you know why he’s gathering monsters?”

Everyone shook their heads.

“They have a method for reanimating demon corpses.”

“How come?”

“Doctor Yuhito. He is said to have researched the Humas , Gabranth , and even the Evila . There are rumors that he’s been working on a method to turn dead demons into zombies.”

Taishi and the others shivered at the thought of zombies.

“However, it doesn’t last too long. And I’ve heard that the corpse must be fresh. I guess that’s why he’s been collecting them.”

“War.... huh”

“Yes. They seem to be gathering dead demons to increase their forces.”

“That’s pretty serious... are the humans safe?”

“...Most will probably stay as spectators.”

“We won’t participate?”

“Yeah, since we aren’t allied with them, if we went and messed up, we’d be attacked by both parties.”

“I see...”

“Besides, we’re still in the middle of training right now! It’s not like we’ll send you off to your deaths.”

Hearing the word ‘kill’, the four paled. They had clearly been preparing to fight, but hadn’t really given it much thought.

Suddenly, they didn’t feel like it was their problem anymore. As Vale had said, if they joined now, they’d be killed immediately. The heaviness of the thought left their throats dry.

“If it’s you, Hero-samas, you’ll be able to become stronger than anyone else. Now is the time to train.”

The four looked at each other and nodded.

“We understand, Vale. We know that we can’t take it easy anymore.”

“Yes! Let’s get stronger than anyone else!”

“Yeah!”

The four had once again regained their motivation. Vale looked up at the sky, to where Bird had disappeared.

(However, no matter who wins, the world will definitely fall into chaos.) Thinking of the fate of the world, he too, vowed to become stronger.

Chapter 32: The Gree Caves

Hihiro and company stayed a night in Lyntemb and immediately set off for Beast Kingdom Passion .

“If we just go straight down this road, we’ll find Passion , right?”

Hihiro posed a question, and Arnold answers.

“No, to get there we’ll have to go through the Gree Caves . We’ll see it right after we get through them.”

“Is there something special about the caves?”

“Yeah. They’re crawling with monsters above Rank B, and we can’t really take the Raidpics with us.”

Apparently, the caves were teeming with narrow passages, making traveling through them on Raidpics impossible.

“Is there any detour we could take?”

“There are, but they’re quite long, and the monsters are stronger. Considering the risks, I think the Gree Caves are still the best option.”

“I see. So we just have to go straight?”

“Are you okay with that?”

“I don’t really care which way we go, but isn’t it best to get there faster?”

“Y-Yeah.”

“That’s why I’ll listen to you this time. You better be grateful.”

“You sure sound important today!”

And so the group’s next destination was settled.

After riding for a while, they came to the entrance of a large cave. The hole itself expanded greatly in all directions.

“Oi, are you sure we can’t take these birds?”

Just from the outside appearance, it seemed that anything would be able to pass through easily.

“Yeah, the inside structure is a bit complicated, and there are quite a few narrow passages that we have to go through. It may seem a bit sad, but this is where we and the Raidpics bid adieu.”

Arnold said as he patted his Raidpic's head.

"Thanks for taking us here. Give Max my regards."

The Raidpic gave a sorrowful expression as it rubbed its beak against Arnold's face.

"Oi, do something about this one."

Arnold turned at these words and witnessed a Raidpic licking Hihiro's face with its long tongue. It seems that that one was also reluctant to part with Hihiro.

"Ahaha! It sure has become quite attached to you!"

"Quit messing around, bird! Want me to grill you?"

Even so, the Raidpic paid no mind and continued to soak Hihiro with its drool.

"For the love of... It's sticky."

Hihiro glared at the Raidpic with an unpleasant expression.

"Now, now. That's just how much he liked you as a master. Please leave it at that."

"...Yeah, you guys did make my ride quite comfortable. Here's a farewell present."

Hihiro started writing a character which he released at both of the Raidpics, and the two shook with expressions of delight.

"W-What did you do?"

"I used Comfort . It should blow away their fatigue."

The word should have also made them feel refreshed. Hihiro imagined them returning to their homes at a refreshing pace, but suddenly, the two birds cried out and ran off at an alarming pace.

"W-What's wrong with them?"

"...No idea."

It seemed that the effect was too strong. It raised their tension to too high of a level. Watching the Raidpics press onward like bullet trains, Hihiro concluded to himself that they would return home safely.

"And what's with this turn of events?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I thought that you would only give a reward to the one that carried you."

Muir imitated Arnold's questioning pose. She seemed to be of the same opinion.

The two of them had a slight grasp of Hihiro's personality. The only time when Hihiro would move would be when he was in a good mood, or when he was returning a favor.

He didn't seem to be particularly happy, so they wondered what had moved him to this extent.

"What are you saying? They took good care of my servants. So isn't it natural for me to grace them as the master?"

"Haha~n, I see, I see. To you, we're all your servants, and you rewarded the two with your Word Magic for their hard work. I see, I see. By the way, can I raise an objection now? Mostly towards being called a servant!?"

"Objection overruled."

"Funnuuuuuu! I keep saying this, but we're no servants of yours!"

"I think I've said this before, but I was joking."

"You bastard! Are you just trying to make me mad!?"

"Now then, let's go."

"Listen to me!"

Muir shrugged her shoulders as she followed the two.

The inside of the cave was dim, but it seemed to be quite wide. The sound of running water could be heard. It was coming from the left, and when the group turned towards it, they found a giant slug monster drooling as it stared at them.

"Right off the bat!? What's more, this is the Rank B Gree Slugger!"

Arnold stood in front of Muir and brandished his sword.

"A slug... is it? I'll test something."

Hihiro spoke as he released a word. And suddenly, a white powder scattered over the slug. The already-slow slug's speed dropped even further, and its body gradually began to shrink.

"Oh, so Slugs actually can be dealt with with Salt ."

Right, the word he wrote was Salt .

(As long as I have a clear image, this magic can even bring salt into existence. It really can do anything. Though instead of it being actual salt, it may have brought forth something with a similar effect. It'll probably disappear in a minute.) He groaned about his own power. But he did feel glad that he had used it from the depths of his heart. Since the Slug had become small, Arnold impaled it on his sword.

"I'm not surprised anymore, but what did you do?"

"I just put into practice something I wanted to test since I was a kid."

"...?"

Arnold and Muir stared at him with a blank expression. But they had long ago realized that at this point, they wouldn't be able to get him to talk any more. So the group pressed forward.

After walking a while, the pathway became quite narrow. They could only tread along it one at a time, so they proceeded with vigilance. Eventually, they found themselves in another open space spanned by a small bridge.

“Can I... cross this bridge? Is it even crossable?”

Hiiro's question was valid. The bridge was made out of wood, but several places were rotten, and the rope holding it up was visibly decayed. It didn't seem that this bridge was able to support humans.

But it looked like this was the only way to the other side.

“What should we do, Hiiro? This distance is a bit far for a jump...”

“If I just use Fly , all our problems would be solved.”

“Ah, right!”

But there, Hiiro thought.

(If I use that, we'll definitely be able to get across. But if something were to happen when we were crossing, the other two...) If there was some sort of trap laid, or a monster was lying in wait, it would be inconvenient.

(Instead of flying, it'll be easier to deal with through walking. Though if something does come out, I could just abandon them...) No, there was something wrong with that train of thought. They were currently important sources of information. For now, they were necessary. It would be too great a loss to lose them here.

“Oi, hurry up and cast magic on me!”

“No, I think I should...”

Hiiro approached the run-down bridge. He concentrated magic on his finger and wrote Connect .

“Good, no matter what happens, it'll hold together for a minute. Let's go.”

“Eh? O-Oh? Oi!”

Though they were surprised at seeing Hiiro suddenly rush forwards, the sight of Hiiro crossing without a problem caused them to join hands and run after him. The bridge that seemed like it would collapse under their feet caused Arnold to apply pressure to the hand connected to his, but he reassured himself that Hiiro

had done something again.

(Even so, what magic did he use this time...)

Even with all three of them running on it, though the bridge creaked dangerously, it showed absolutely no signs of collapsing.

(And, like, I kinda wanted to fly, you know...)

Not only Arnold, but Muir as well. Both of them had a disappointed expression.

The group succeeded in crossing the bridge within a minute, but the two beside Hihiro seemed to be tired because they thought that the chances of falling to their deaths was high. As Hihiro believed in his own power, he could not understand their fatigue.

“Y-You... what did you do?”

“The word Connect made it so that for one minute, the ropes would not give out no matter what.”

“Y-You can even do that?”

Muir raised her voice while Arnold glared at him with his eyes half closed.

“Ye~ah, no matter how I look at it, that magic is unfair!”

“No idea. Anyways, let’s go.”

But at that moment, Hihiro experienced an extreme impact on his back, causing him to roll on the ground.

“Hihiro!”

“Kya!”

The two of them watched Hihiro get sent flying before their eyes. But immediately after, it appeared before them.

“G-Ganrock!?”

The Ganrock, as its name might imply, was a monster whose limbs and face were made of rocks. Its height was only around 50cm, but these monsters were able to build up amazing amounts of momentum, so getting hit by them was no joke.

(Ow... That hurt quite a bit...)

Hihiro lifted up his aching body and glared at the cause. But it wasn’t only one, there were two more for a

total of three.

(Right, this cave was supposed to be filled with monsters over Rank B...) He briefly glanced at Arnold.

(I think it'll be a bit difficult for that old man...?) Usually, he would just use Burst to take them out in an instant, but this was a cave. He didn't want to cause a cave-in here.

But with a body structure like that, a sword probably wouldn't do much damage. It would be difficult for Arnold. Thinking that, Hiiro shouted out.

“Old Man, use your sword!”

That was his conclusion. Though it would definitely be difficult to deal with them with a blade, Hiiro had a reason.

“Old Man! Start with the one closest to you!”

“B-But with a sword, it's a bit...”

Arnold knew about the specialties of the Ganrock and knew that he wouldn't be able to do much with his current armaments.

“Don't worry, I'm going to use this!”

He said as he began writing a word. The word collided with the Ganrock in front of Arnold.

“Now!”

“I-I don't really get it, but Ora!”

But, the Ganrock dodged to the side.

“Like I'd let you escape!”

He turned his blade sideways and slashed at it horizontally.

And, for some reason, the Ganrock's body split perfectly in two.

“Eh? ...Wha?”

The lack of resistance from his enemy shocked him. That's right, there was barely any force acting against his blade. It felt as if he were swinging his sword through a ball of sand.

“Hey, on to the next one!”

Hiiro sent out another word. But perhaps the Ganrocks had become more vigilant. They jumped up to avoid it. The word hit the ground and activated, and as soon as one of the Ganrocks landed, it sunk into it.

“Ah! I see, so that's it!”

It seemed that Arnold finally understood the effect of the word. He turned his eyes to Hiiro.

“You have a word that makes things softer?”

Correct. The word that Hiiro used was Soft . The first Ganrock felt its effect and was easily cleaved in half by a sword. When the ground was affected by it, the Ganrock buried itself with its own weight.

“Old Man, I’ll leave that buried one to you!”

Saying that, Hiiro once again began concentrating. Arnold turned his gaze to the Ganrock, who was desperately struggling to get out of the ground.

“Fufun. If it’s an immobile Ganrock, then all I have to do is concentrate my power and break it!”

He took a stance with his large sword.

“ Wind Fang !”

The wind wrapped around the blade.

“More. I have to bind it stronger, or it won’t go through their bodies.”

With plenty of time, he continued to strengthen his sword. Eventually he positioned himself to thrust.

“HAAAAAAAAAAH!”

The sword passed perfectly through the Ganrock’s body. And it seemed that Hiiro was able to use his Word Magic to defeat the last one easily.

“Fuu~ That was hectic.”

Arnold lowered his back onto the ground and took a deep breath.

“You were suddenly sent flying. My insides went cold for a moment.”

“Are you alright?”

Muir let out a worried voice.

“No problem. But it consumed more magic than I thought.”

Air Writing cost 100 MP, so even with his large reserve of Mana, Hiiro couldn’t use it too often. Though he had MP recovery items, there was no telling what would happen next, so it was best to save them.

“Then we better get out quickly.”

“Right.”

“Let’s go.”

The three pressed onwards. Eventually, they arrived at another open area. But to their delight, they could see a light at the end of the gently sloping path.

Chapter 33: Muir's Awakening

“It seems that that is the exit.”

“Yeah, let's get to a town quickly, and pop into hot bath~”

“R-Right. We did encounter quite a few monsters.”

As the three try to approach the slope to the light, rocks start dropping from the ceiling. Shivers run down the three's spines.

“O-Oi, Hihiro...?”

“...Hah, so like in games, we'll have fight a boss battle before we can reach the exit...”

Muir's body shakes. The three simultaneously look up. And there...

“SHAAAAAAAAA!”

Was an anaconda that looked perfect for the silver screen. It was skillfully wrapping itself around the formations on the ceiling as it slithered around.

“I believe that was... Clay Viper.”

“Oi oi, is this for real!?”

Hihiro had seen it before in the encyclopedia. It was a Rank S monster. Its length could reach 30 meters, and its body was as thick as a tree. Its body was scaly, and gave off a black luster. Its face was menacing as well. Its forked tongue darted in and out of its huge mouth. Its eyes were red, and gave off a suspicious light as if to bind whoever gazed into them.

“Well, well. For now, you better keep your distance, Chibi.”

“Ah, y-yeah...”

Muir had no choice but to follow Hihiro's words. There was no way she could prove useful against this fearsome foe.

“Old Man, can you do any long range attacks?”

“Well, to an extent.”

“Then use those to distract it. I'll put it to sleep like with the Red Boar.”

But for that, time was necessary. Writing the necessary characters required concentration, so he couldn't have himself be a target.

“Got it, but you better make it quick. My level rose, but this is a bit much for me alone. Actually it may be impossible.”

Normally, running would be the priority. However, in the Red Boar fight, the enemy was easily defeated with Word Magic . Arnold was assured that Hiiro would be able to do something.

“It’s coming.”

While they were idling, the Clay Viper had started rushing at them with its mouth wide open. The two avoid it by jumping high. But the viper knocks them out of the air with its tail.

“Guh!”

The two fall to the ground simultaneously. Arnold complains about its strength as he rolls on the floor. He seems to be in quite a bit of pain.

(Damn... It’s quite skillful with its tail.)

Hiiro grumbles as he takes some distance and begins writing a word. Arnold stands up, and confronts the Clay Viper.

Suddenly, a fluid spews from the snake’s mouth.

Though he was startled for a moment, Arnold was able to successfully avoid it by leaping backwards. But the ground that came into the contact with the liquid begins to sizzle as it dissolves away.

“Oy, this thing even comes equipped with venom...”

‘This is no joke,’ Arnold thought as he applies more pressure to the hand clenching his sword.

“ Wind Fang ! Take this!”

As he swings his blade, a magic-like wind cutter is released. The sharp blade of wind slices the Clay Viper’s skin, and blood scatters.

But in the next moment, the wound closes on its own. It seems that weak attacks won’t be able to overcome the beast’s natural regenerative powers.

Arnold seems taken aback, but the Clay Viper doesn’t rest. As if it were not slashed at all, it starts rushing towards him.

“Ku!”

He somehow dodges to the side, and prepares to attack again. But the Viper suddenly dives into the ground.

“Wha!? It can even do that!?”

Watching this scene, Hiiro clicks his tongue. At this rate, he wonders whether his Word Magic will hit. The Clay Viper is currently focusing on Arnold, so Hiiro was able to finish writing his word without problem, though.

But with that speed, and its ability to burrow, it will be more than difficult to hit.

“Dammit! Where are you! Come out already, you slithery bastard!”

Arnold shouts out, but there are no signs of it resurfacing.

Suddenly, the ground begins to shake. The two fighters concentrate on their surroundings to sense where it will emerge.

“KYAAaaaa!”

The place it emerged was in the shadows where Muir was hiding. It uses its long body to wrap around, and bind her, while heading back up to the ceiling.

“MUIIIIR!”

“Damn!”

Even Hiiro didn’t anticipate the non-combatant Muir being attacked. He wasn’t vigilant enough.

Hiiro immediately points his finger, and aims his word. But perhaps because its feral instincts were screaming danger, it glares back, and gets into a position where it can move at any time. At this rate, the chance that it will dodge is high.

But Hiiro wasn’t going to waste the word he had wasted time writing.

“Old Man, do you think you can stop his movements!?”

“It’s not that I can’t, but Muir will get dragged in!”

Arnold grits his teeth as he stares at the Clay Viper.

Muir thought that that her situation was pitiful. There was nothing she could do. Even though she couldn’t fight, even though she was useless, here she was being imprisoned, and preventing Hiiro from attacking.

(Why... I’m always being protected...? Even though I never wished for it...) Her mind turns to the past. Her life was always one that would go out with the wind. There was nothing she could do about it. She would always watch others’ backs, as they stood in front to protect her. That was what she found solace in.

(Even though... that’s no good... Even though I promised Oji-san that I would get strong...) As she feels pain from the Viper tightening its body, Muir opens her eyes. And reflected on them was Arnold’s mortified face.

(Oji-san...!)

Because of her, he's making such a face. From here on out, perhaps Arnold and Hihiro will be hurt because of her. Arnold's words play back in her head like a revolving lantern.

"You're the kid he entrusted to me. Even if I die, I'll protect you."

"...No, even I can get strong. I'm a Beastman like Oji-san!"

She had vowed at that moment that she would get strong. But she was unable to believe in herself. She was never able to do anything. She spent her days doubting whether or not she would even be able to influence her own life.

Fighting is scary, and being protected makes her feel relieved. But still, there are people she believes in.

"You're also a Beastman. If we're talking about latent abilities, I don't think you'll lose to any Beastman out there. No matter what you say, you've got the blood of that clan flowing in ya. And also, you're that guy's daughter."

She remembers Arnold's words, and opens her eyes to look at him again. His face hasn't changed. She was the one making him make such a face. Then what should she do? There was only one answer.

"I just... have to do something!"

Hihiro analyzes the situation. At this rate, Muir will be strangled to death, and after that, the Viper will move around freely again.

(There's no choice. I'll put Sleep on hold for now. First I have to cut off his movements... Hmm?) The Clay Viper's body began to shine. No, to be precise, only the part that was wrapped around Muir shined abnormally. And suddenly that light collected.

(What is that?)

The moment he thought that—

A violent electrical discharge occurred. No, it wasn't anything as soft as that. As if lightening had struck, power condensed in the glowing area.

"SHAAAAAA!?"

The sudden electrical current coursing through the Clay Viper's body causes it to go numb. Neither Arnold or Hihiro have a grasp of the situation.

"Now!"

Hiiro sees this as an opportunity, and releases Sleep . It easily hits the immobile Clay Viper.

“Good! Old Man! Use all your strength to cut its head off!”

Hearing Hiiro’s words snaps Arnold back to reality. He begins concentrating his power.

“ Wind Fang !”

He takes some time to concentrate the power of wind onto his blade. The power wraps around it, and the blade appears to increase in size. Eventually, the green blade grows to about the size of three adults.

And Arnold lifts that blade high up, aims it at the Clay Viper’s head, and swings down with all his might.

“Release MUIIIIIIR!”

The flesh cleanly separates. Only the head falls to the ground. And with that, the Clay Viper’s life comes to an end. But it wasn’t over yet.

The lightning was one thing, but Muir’s safety has yet to be confirmed. Even now, the Viper’s body is coiled around Muir, and she stays immobile. But finally, the large body loses its strength, and falls from the ceiling. And from that, Muir’s body emerged.

Muir appears to be unconscious, but her body glows faintly. When Arnold moves to catch her...

“Gugagagagagagagagagagadadadadada!”

He suddenly feels the pain of electricity coursing through his body.

“Old Man!”

But he holds her close without letting go.

“Kuga... g... thank god... Mui...”

He sheds tears as he wraps his large body around hers. After a while, the light fades. At the same time, the electric current flowing through Arnold stopped.

“Just what was that?”

Hiiro furrowed his brow as he looks over Muir.

“...It’s this child’s power.”

“So the chibi was the one who stopped the Clay Viper’s movements?”

“Yeah. It seems she’s finally awakened to her Binding .”

“Just what is binding, anyways?”

“...You know how Beastmen can’t use magic, right?”

“Yeah.”

“To make up for that, a certain researcher came up with something amazing.”

“...What?”

“This.”

As he says this, Arnold presents the bracelet hanging from his right arm.

“That is?”

“This is the Nameless Bracelet . When a Beastman truly desires power, it will unlock their latent abilities.”

“Something that convenient actually exists?”

If so, he wanted one. But being a human, he would probably be unable to use it.

“This bracelet establishes a link with the Spirits . If one was to awaken to a Spirit Soul , the bracelet’s name changes, it takes on a new form, and it grants power to the user. By the way, mine is a Bracelet of the Wind .”

“I see. So that’s the power the Gabranth obtained to compensate for their lack of magic.”

“Yeah. To awaken is to establish a contract with a Spirit . I exchanged a contract with the Spirit of the Wind . And this child...”

“ Spirit of Thunder ... is it?”

Arnold nods in affirmation.

“But that surprised me. For her to be able to generate that much lightning.”

“Rather than generate, it’s more like she became lightning itself.”

“Is that how it is?”

“Well, I’ll explain the details after we arrive at Passion . I want to let Muir rest.”

“Got it. You can head out first.”

“Why?”

“I’ll come after I get some proof we took that thing out.”

“Understood.”

Arnold exits the cave with Muir on his back. Hihiro approaches the recently-deceased Clay Viper.

(I think it was over here...)

The place he checked was the area that was wrapped around Muir. It wasn’t only burned. It was as if the cells has been obliterated into nothingness.

“That’s some crazy output. With this, they’ll fare just fine against magic. The reason I didn’t feel any magic when Arnold used his Wind Fang was because it wasn’t magic I guess.”

He did a quick analysis, but suddenly he felt a prescence behind him. Thinking it was a monster, he moved his hand towards his sword, and he drew it while turning around. But what stood before him was no monster.

“...Who are you?”

Chapter 34: The Kitty Bastard's Invitation

From its appearance, it was a Beastman. Its hair was pure black, and its cold eyes did not give off a friendly impression.

(A Beastman... is it a Black Panther type...?)

But from its appearance and atmosphere, Hiiro could tell it was no ordinary passerby. He felt that the one before him was a more troublesome opponent than the Clay Viper. That it was someone he wouldn't want to make an enemy out of.

That Beastman slowly opened its mouth.

“Were you the one who killed this one-nya¹²?”

Hiiro almost fell over. Even though all of his instincts screamed that the one before him was a dangerous existence, its voice was as high as a child, and there was that speech trait. With that appearance, the -nya isn't cute at all, you know. It's more creepy than anything.

“Let me ask again-nya. Are you the one who killed it-nya?”

“Do I have any obligation to answer you?”

The Beastman put his hand to his chin and thought for a moment. After which, he balled one hand into a fist, and hit it on the other palm.

“Oh~ you really don't have such an obligation-nya.”

The person he was facing was a bit out there, but still, Hiiro couldn't afford to let down his guard. His instincts told him not to be negligent. Behind his back, his hands were already prepared to cast Word Magic .

“Well, I guess it doesn't matter who killed it-nya. I'll bring it back all the same-nya.”

“Hmm? Wait a second, you're bringing this thing back?”

“Yes-nya. That's my mission-nya.”

(Mission? Bringing back something this big? What's more, it's already a corpse.) Various questions surfaced in Hiiro's mind, but he got the feeling that it was better to not get involved any further. He need not get involved with this cat of mysterious origin.

“Well, do what you want. Before that, let me get some proof that I took it out.”

“If it's just that, then go ahead-nya. But please make it quick-nya.”

(Hmm? He's surprisingly honest. It didn't come out to steal the credit...?) Hiiro looked at the immobile Beastman, and waited for it to take action. But as nothing was happening, Hiiro approached the Clay Viper corpse.

(Let's just get this over with and leave.)

Hiiro reached out his hand to grasp the Clay Viper Fang as proof of his kill, but as soon as his hand approached it, he sensed bloodlust. Hiiro immediately drew his sword and took a stance, but that kitty bastard was already in front of him, grasping the blade.

“W-What are you doing!?”

In response, the cat smiled, and kicked Hiiro away.

“Gu—!”

Hiiro was sent sliding, but he was able to brace his legs to avoid falling over. Still, the damage from the impact contorted Hiiro's face.

“Y-You...!”

“As I thought, you're strong-nya. You didn't kill it by luck-nya.”

The cat's happy face was annoying.

“Are you pickin' a fight, you kitty bastard!?”

Hiiro shouts as he prepares to slash, but his opponent immediately appears in front of him.

(He's much faster than me!?)

Hiiro immediately moved his katana to guard, but he's blown away again. This time, he rolls along the ground, but rises up immediately and gets into position again.

(Damn... How can he overcome my katana barehanded?) Normally, he shouldn't be able to grasp the blade or hit it. Especially if he was hitting the sharp edge. His hand should have taken severe damage. Even so, Hiiro's opponent is completely unharmed.

“Nyaha! You can fight-nya. You're strong-nya. If nyu try a little harder, I might hire you as my follower-nya.”

The word follower caused a vein to pop up on Hiiro's head.

“Don't screw with me, kitty bastard... I'll show you something you'll regret.”

Without braking eye contact, he concentrated magic onto his finger.

(Let's imagine the Muir from before.)

“Take this!”

He wrote the word Thunder , and sent it at his opponent's feet.

Though it wasn't comparable to Muir's, a powerful electric discharge went through the ground towards his enemy.

“Nya!?”

The cat opens its eyes in surprise for a moment, but it resumes its smile, as it holds out both of its arms in front. And the electricity disappears as it is sucked towards them.

“Wha!?”

“Nyaha! Nyu were a Lightning user-nya? There was quite some power, but that isn't enough to beat me-nya.”

Hihiro couldn't understand what had just happened.

(I understand that the electricity somehow disappeared into its hands... but what did that damn cat do?) He could use *Pry* to gather information, but it takes time to use. There's no way he would be able to cope with that speed.

(Then...)

Hihiro writes a character on his own body. And...

He appears before his opponent.

“Nya!?”

The cat's even more surprised than before. Hihiro's speed was just that great.

*(By writing *Speed* on myself, I can increase my own abilities! Now get pierced already!)* Using his momentum, Hihiro thrust *Piercer*. But still, his opponent saw through him, and Hihiro cuts nothing but air. The ease at which his attack was dodged made Hihiro believe he was fighting a true wild beast.

(Damn! I was dodged. So he wasn't serious yet.)

Power, speed, presence. Taking all of these into account, Hihiro guessed that his opponent was an existence high up in the ranks of Beastmen. This damn cat was strong enough to play with Rank S monsters as if they were cute pets.

(I can't slack off for a single moment.)

If he made a single mistake, he might die. Hihiro continuously pondered over just how he would conquer this person. If he wanted to run, it may be possible, but he wouldn't be satisfied with leaving after being treated as a fool.

(I'm still a child... but I get the feeling that I can't turn away here. More importantly, that cat... PISSES ME OFF!) Hihiro glares at his enemy again, and writes *Speed* once more.

(I'll give you more and more surprises!)

With the speed of the wind, Hihiro closes the gap. He increased his speed much more than before, startling his opponent.

But for a split second, his enemy narrowed its eyes, and its legs swell unnaturally. It nimbly dodges Hihiro's assault.

(Wha!?! It can even react at this speed!?)

Hihiro had used parallel writing to write Speed on his body multiple times. The effects stacked, giving him overwhelming speed. Even so, his opponent dodged.

Hihiro slashes again and again, but all his swings are in vain. But there, he realized something was off.

(That bastard can grasp a sword bare-handed, so why has it been dodging all of these...?) Right, from its initial actions, this cat should be able to defend easily. It has no reason not to.

(Since it's gotten to this, I'll add something more...) Hihiro accelerates even more, to try and force his opponent to guard. At that moment, he heard laughter.

"Nyaha! Yes, yes, you pass-nya!"

"Hah?"

Hihiro heard an unexpected line.

"If it's nyu, you could even become my successor-nya."

"What are you even talking about?"

"What's your level?"

"Hah? 40, but... ah."

He had been drawn into his enemy's pace, and unintentionally spoke his level. Hihiro was filled with regret.

"40!?! And you're that strong-nya!? Yes, I'm satisfied with you-nya!"

Hihiro was repenting in his heart.

"My name is Crouch-nya. What's yours?"

"...No idea."

"Could this be that amnesia thing-nya!?"

Crouch seemed shocked, as his mouth hangs open.

"This is serious-nya! This is serious-nya! Ah, I should have the professor look at you-nya!"

"Professor? No, I'm fine! It was a joke!"

"I-Is that so-nya? That's good-nya."

Crouch uses his forearm to wipe away sweat. It appears that he was truly worried.

(What's with this one? Don't throw off my pace... This cat may be more annoying than the old man.)

"Then what's your name-nya?"

"...Tanaka Tarou¹³."

"Oh, so that's your name-nya! Then, Tarou, come with me-nya!"

"Why?"

"The war will start soon-nya. I'll use you as my retainer-nya!"

This is exceedingly bad. Hiiro's head went blank. He never thought he would be invited to war.

(And as a retainer. That sounds like it comes with a bit of status. If this was based off of my strength, then I can understand it, but still this is bad... really.) Crouch is completely eager. At this rate, Hiiro was going to be forcibly kidnapped.

(There's no choice. Though I hate these sort of situations.) As he thought that, Hiiro thrust with his katana.

"I'll never serve below someone weaker than me. If you want me, then you'll have to defeat me!"

Crouch's eyes widen at Hiiro's words. He seems taken aback, but his face loosens, and a crescent moon forms.

"How interesting-nya..."

Sparks flew between them, and it seemed they would start duking it out at any moment. But suddenly Crouch furrowed his brow.

"...Eh? Is that so-nya? ...Got it-nya."

Crouch hangs his head in disappointment.

"Tarou, our battle's put on hold-nya."

"..."

Saying that, Crouch touched the Clay Viper's body and head. And in the next moment, the items disappeared as if they were being sucked into his hands.

(W-What is this magic? No, he's a Beastman, so is it Binding ?) In a few seconds, the giant Clay Viper disappeared completely. And Crouch gazed at Hiiro.

"This is an urgent job-nya. I wanted to bring you along, but there's no choice-nya. There'll be another chance-nya. I mean, you're going to Passion , right-nya?"

"Who knows?"

“Nyahaha, I’ve taken a liking to your impudent behavior as well. Well then, Tarou, let’s meet again-nya.”

Saying that, the cat disappeared as if it were being absorbed into the ground. Hiiro put up his guard as he walked to where Crouch was standing, but nothing happened.

It seems he’s caught the interest of quite a person.

(I may have to get out of Passion quickly.)

Hiiro didn’t want to meet that annoying kitty bastard again. He shrugged his shoulders... And then he realized something.

“...The proof of subjugation...”

It was impossible to recover it.

Chapter 35: Level Up to Power Up

Crouch took the proof of subjugation, along with the rest of the Clay Viper, so Hihiro had to leave the cave empty-handed.

But then, he realized something. His body had become heavily fatigued, though not to the extent where he couldn't walk. The reason was quite clear.

(It must be because I used the synergistic effect of parallel writing.) He had written Speed on himself multiple times, and the effects stacked. It raised his speed just fine, but it put a strain on his body unbecoming of his level. His body creaked as it tried to keep up with his accelerated movements.

(This is quite painful...)

He thought, as he carefully walked forward as not to lose his way. When he finally got outside, he saw Muir sleeping under the shade of a tree, and Arnold looking after her.

As Hihiro was late, Arnold issued a complaint.

“What the hell were you doing? Did you not know what path to take back?”

“No. I see. So you didn't see?”

Crouch disappeared into the ground. Perhaps he came the same way as well. There's a high probability that Arnold never saw him.

“See what?”

“No, it's nothing. How's the chibi?”

“Well, she hasn't received any serious injuries, and she's just unconscious. There's no helping it. She let out that much power, and she was being squeezed by the Clay Viper for a while.”

Muir was fast asleep. Even after releasing an amazing amount of lightning, her body showed no external injury. Even her clothes didn't look burned in the slightest.

“I'm sorry, but until Muir wakes up...”

As Arnold was about to say something, Muir opened her eyes.

“Uu...”

“Muir? Are you alright, Muir?”

“...Un... cle?”

Her eyes were still unfocused, but she could make out Arnold before her.

“Yeah, it’s me. How is it? Does your body feel strange at all?”

Muir’s vision slowly cleared, and she realized that she was already outside of the cave. Moving only her eyes, she shifted her gaze to Arnold.

“My body hurts a bit, but I’m fine. The monster...?”

“If you’re talking about the snake, we took it out.”

And Muir gave a sorrowful expression.

“I... I’m sorry... Because of me...”

Though the monster was defeated, Muir felt depressed over the pain she made the other two go through because of her. But the next words made her doubt her ears.

“Ahaha, what are you saying? It’s because of you we were able to take out that snake, you know. Do you remember anything?”

“...Eh?”

Arnold bluntly explained everything he saw to Muir. The contents were things she couldn’t believe herself. Her own power had stopped the Clay Viper’s movement and had given an opportunity to defeat it.

But Hiiro wasn’t denying it. He simply stood with his eyes closed and his arms folded. Perhaps this was his sign of affirmation.

“Oji-san... is that true?”

Even now, she couldn’t believe it. But Arnold had absolutely no reason to lie. But the fact that her own power was able to change something, the fact that she was able to stand against that powerful monster was more shocking than anything.

At that point, Hiiro tried testing something. He wrote a word on the ground.

“Oy, Hiiro. What are you doing?”

“Shut up and watch.”

And something began to be projected onto the ground. It was as if a television screen had been created. And on it, scenes from the previous battle began playing back.

(It seems it was a success. Using Project , I can show others scenes from my memory. How convenient.) The other two seemed flabbergasted, but Arnold recognized the scene as one he had experienced himself, so he could understand the meaning behind Hiiro’s magic.

“C-Could this be the battle we just had...?”

“Yeah, Shorty.”

“W-What?”

“This is the truth. Take it however you will.”

Hihiro spoke as he lowered his gaze to the footage on the ground. Muir copied him and looked upon the scene.

What was displayed was the moment when she was captured by the Clay Viper. When suddenly, a huge electric outburst occurred, and Hihiro took advantage of the opportunity.

After that, her body continued to let out a faint light and Arnold caught her. Arnold showed clear signs of being electrocuted. Even Hihiro and Arnold’s conversations were clearly audible.

Seeing Muir’s shocked face at the video, Hihiro thought to himself what a troublesome person she was while he wrote the word `Project` again. The effective time of one minute was nearing its end, so the footage would be cut off. That’s why he had to use `Parallel Writing`’s stacking effect to lengthen the duration.

“Is this... true?”

As if she was still in doubt, Muir asked Arnold. And he nodded gently.

“Yeah, so you finally awakened. You did well, Muir.”

“Fue...”

Muir broke out in tears and clung to Arnold. He patted her head and said, “I told you, didn’t I? That you would become strong. You still have a long way to go, but the `Lightning Spirit` has acknowledged your efforts.”

“*Sob... Sob.. Ueeeeeeen.*”¹⁴

“Now you can fight too. But remember, you’re just a beginner. Let’s take this one step at a time. Okay, Muir?”

“Ye... *sob*... ye... Yeah!”

Arnold wiped off her tears, and she smiled happily.

“Um, can I have a moment of your time?”

During that scene, the words of someone who couldn’t read the mood rang out.

“H-hey, Hihiro. We’re currently going through an emotional moment.”

“Just look around you.”

“What do you... yes?”

They were surrounded by monsters.

“Oh... Oh my...”

His words were understandable.

“Well, it’s not like we’re in a safe area. It’s not like we care what they’re doing when we attack either.”

“You... you damn monsters! Read the mood for a second!”

“For now, let’s clean up. Shorty, you stay here. You can’t move yet, right?”

“Ah, yeah.”

Muir realized that nothing changed. That she was still someone who was protected. But then Hiiro spoke.

“Oy, Shorty. If you’ve got some power, then you’ve got to earn your keep. Next time, you’re on your own.”

“...Yeah!”

Those words bestowed strength unto her heart. The fact that she wouldn’t be protected anymore made her slightly uncomfortable, but the happiness she felt from those words greatly outweighed that. In order not to let him down, Muir resolved to become strong.

She closely watched the backs of the two protecting her. Up until now she had always been watching the backs of people protecting her. But next time, she would be standing beside them. Muir unintentionally clenched her fist as she followed their fighting style with her eyes.

“Fly away.”

Using Burst , the enemies were blown away in an instant. But...

“UHYAAAAAH!”

Hiiro had forgotten that Arnold was there too.

“W-What are you doing, Hiiro!? That was a close one!”

“...Well, I thought that if it was you, you would be fine.”

“There’s no way I would be fine, ninnyhammer!”

Even during battle, these two never changed.

“Okay, then Old Man, step back.”

“It’s too late for that!”

As he shouted that, Arnold noticed Hiiro writing another word, and he backed off.

“Next is this.”

Hiiro shot the words straight at a group of monsters. And when it reached the center of the group, he activated it.

And suddenly...

The entire area of effect of the word froze over, and the monsters within its scope were frozen solid. Its

area of effect was just around 4 tatami. The vertical area was also the same.

“O-Oh, amazing.”

Arnold stared at the block of ice in amazement. Hiiro could make use of Fire, Lightning, and even Ice. He was truly a first class magician.

Thinking that he didn’t want to lose, Arnold continuously used his Wind Fang to take down enemies. Perhaps because they were afraid of the two peerless fighters before them, the remaining monsters ran off.

“Alright, that’s all of them.”

“Yeah.”

The two of them sheathed their weapons and returned to Muir. They found her with an expression of shock frozen on her face.

“W-What’s wrong, Muir?”

Muir responded while keeping up the same expression.

“O-Oji-san... my level has...”

It seemed that she was surprised at her own sudden growth in level.

“Hah? So that’s it. Well, that sounds about right. Even though you didn’t actively fight, you’re acting in our group, so the EXP of the monsters we defeat flowed to you too. Of course your level would rise.”

They had registered as a party at the guild, so the monsters they fought in the Gree Caves , as well as the ones they fought now, gave EXP to Muir. Since her level was quite low from the start, her level was raised by quite a bit.

“And didn’t you feel the level ups in the cave as well? Didn’t you notice?”

“N-No, I noticed it, but I thought I would check later. But the level up sound only sounded off three times...”

“Ah, it’s that. You jumped multiple levels at once. So having it sound out three times doesn’t mean you leveled up three levels.”

As proof, when Hiiro defeated the Red Boar, his level raised by four. But he only got a single notification.

“S-So that’s how it is...”

“Well, I also didn’t check. I think I leveled up in the caves too, and I also leveled up in the fight just now.”

Arnold and Muir checked their Status , so Hiiro decided to follow suit. He had heard the sound in his ears as well.

HIIRO OKAMURA	Lv. 40

HP:	228/770	ATK:	258320
MP:	150/1500	DEF:	200215
		AGL:	350352
EXP:	75632	HIT:	192200
NEXT:	5890	INT:	309313

<p>Magic Attribute None</p> <p>Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked, Air Writing Unlocked, Parallel Writing Unlocked, Double Chain Unlocked)</p> <p>Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master, Awakened One, Ripper, One Who Imagines, Killer of the Unique, Gourmet Bastard, One Who Follows His Own Path, Friend of the Fairies</p>

Name: Hiiro Okamura	Rank: A
Sex: Male	Equipment
Age: 17	▪ Weapon: Piercer
Race: Human	▪ Guard: Red Robe
From: Unknown	▪ Accessory: Fairy Ring
Quest:	
	Rigin: 4,112,000

ARNOLD OCEAN	Lv. 41
HP: 160/595	ATK: 394438
MP: 30/249	DEF: 359375
	AGL: 328333
EXP: 86038	HIT: 252254
NEXT: 7660	INT: 114

<p>Magic Attribute Wind</p> <p>Magic Fangs of Wind, Explosive Wind Claw, Blast Inversion</p> <p>Titles Friend of the Wind, Former Slave, Chef, Doting Father, Man of a Burning Soul, The Man Referred to As a Pervert, Blade of the Wild</p>

Name: Arnold Ocean	Rank: A
Sex: Male	Equipment
Age: 37	▪ Weapon: Great Sword
Race: Beastman	▪ Guard: Plate Armor
From: Snyoll	▪ Accessory: Bracelet of the Wind
Quest:	
	Rigin: 1,132,000

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MUIR CASTREA		Lv. 34	
HP:	235/280	ATK:	276279
MP:	54/180	DEF:	237245
		AGL:	222225
EXP:	48604	HIT:	188189
NEXT:	1001	INT:	101
Magic Attribute Lightning			
Magic Fang of Lightning			
Titles Friend of Lightning, Kidnapped, My Angel, Cutie Flower, Girl of Tolerance			

Name: Muir Castrea		Rank: C	
Sex: Female	Equipment		
Age: 12	■ Weapon: Knife		
Race: Beastman	■ Guard: Traveler’s Clothes		
From: Rince	■ Accessory: Bracelet of Lightning		
Quest:			
		Rigin: 56,000	

Chapter 36: Determination of the Demon Lord

Hiiro's eyes widened as he saw a certain part of his status.

Double Word Chain Unlocked

As the result was as he predicted, his sense of expectations started surging uncontrollably within him. He wanted to test it immediately. However, for now his first priority was to ascertain its abilities.

Double Word Chain Unlocked MP Cost: 300

It has now become possible for Hiiro to chain two words. Compared to the single word invocation, this ability grants an exceedingly stronger effect when activated. Effective Range; Power of Influence; Versatility; even though all these aspects are exceptionally enhanced, there exists an adverse limitation. Depending on the word, words with incredibly short effective durations exist. Also, unless the image of the character is clearly imprinted in the mind when executing the skill, the word itself would not be able to be written.

In addition, should the writing of the two words be interrupted, the rebound will cause a 50% reduction in all status fields, as well as rendering the caster unable to use magic. All stats and abilities will be returned to normal after a 6 hour time lapse.

(This is another magic that has very strong abilities, but a nasty rebound, huh...)

If an attempt at writing two words failed or is interrupted, there seems to be a significant rebound effect in store.

(It reduces everything by half huh... Writing two words is something that takes time. Should I use it, I need to be extremely wary of my surroundings.)

Indeed, if someone disrupted Hiiro while he was writing, and if the opponent was a formidable foe, it wouldn't be strange if such a penalty led to immediate death.

(However, it is only this level of risk. As expected, it's only natural as its effects are reasonable compared to the risk.)

Nevertheless, Hiiro was thrilled. It couldn't be helped that he was looking forward to all the things he could do. He wanted to quickly set some time aside so he could be alone and try it out, or so he thought.

“Ou~ Hiiro, did you also get something like a title?”

“Who knows, how ‘bout you?”

“W-Well, I kinda think you’re completely to blame for one of these titles, so I want to have a thorough discussion with you about this. But I got a title called Blade of the Wild.”

“Hou~”

“It seems that you can get any kind of Status correction. That’s what I got. How ‘bout you, Muir?”

“Ah, un¹⁵. It’s just too amazing, I don’t quite know how to put it...”

When Muir read out her Status , Arnold couldn’t hide his surprise as his jaw dropped with a pop.

“I-It really rose, huh....your level...”

“U-Un. I feel a little happy, yet a little sad....I think?”

Her feelings must be in turmoil. Being at Level 34 would be the sign of an experienced adventure. However, the girl in question has never stood on the front lines and fought. And yet, the fact that she has reached that level would probably feel like reality has become blurred.

However, the fact that her body had become lighter and that she could feel some sort of power inside of her made her calm.

“Well, isn’t it fine? A level is a level. No matter how high your level is, I think it is better to be like Muir and be doubtful of your own abilities instead of getting arrogant and overestimating them.”

“R-Really?”

“Yeah, well, I doubt Muir will become overconfident, but just accept the reality for now. You will become useful if you work hard. Everything starts from here, is what I’m trying to say.”

“U-Un!”

Saying thus to Arnold, Muir returned a vigorous nod. Indeed, it has been decided that from now on, she herself will also fight. It is precisely because of this that she must think about how to become stronger in anticipation of the future.

“We should be happy that our guild rank also increased. Yours rose as well, right?”

“Aa¹⁶.”

“Un!”

“As I thought, forming a party in this place was a life saver, huh...”

Put simply, even if a person fights and the other members watch, their experience will undoubtedly rise.

“Since it was thanks to Hihiro and Muir that the Clay Viper was killed, making a party was definitely a good choice.”

Although Arnold was the one who made the killing blow, he believed that if he were by himself he would have surely ran. Thus, he gave them the credit.

“Anyway, I’m going on ahead. That’s...that, isn’t it?”

What Hihiro pointed his finger to was a huge gate that could be seen in the forest ahead.

“Aa, that’s the entrance to the Beast Kingdom Passion .”

A few days before Hihiro and the others reached Passion , the Demon Capital Xaos was wrapped in tension. This was due to a letter received a few days ago from the Gabranth .

The contents of the letter contained the conviction of battle. In other words, it was a declaration of war.

“.....”

A large amount of soldiers of mixed rank were lined up below the Demon Castle Terrace. Looking at this spectacle with a bitter face was none other than this Demon Castle’s Lord, the one presiding over the Demon Capital Xaos : Eveam.

With beautiful blond hair that fluttered in the wind, a youthful-looking girl had her slightly childlike facial features distorted as she was looking at the scene with her teeth gritted. Behind such a girl, her attendant Kiria, who was silently watching over her until now, began to speak.

“Are you certain of this?”

“.....”

“Should this continue, it would unmistakably turn into a war of total annihilation.”

“I know that!”

As if to deny Kiria’s words, Eveam forcefully raised her voice. However, after coming this far, she herself was at a loss as to how to proceed.

“To think that the Gabranth would move this fast....”

“No, this was within my expectations.”

“Ku....”

Yes, she was not here because she had nothing left to do. She had also sent them a peace treaty similar to the ones they sent to the Humas.

However, it was not even accepted by them. She had considered offering her own neck to quell the fighting, however, even then Kiria said that the Beastmen would not stop.

As a result, she looked for other ways and tried various different methods to somehow establish communications with them. However, it seemed to be a waste of time. A fool’s errand.

Incidentally, there was one message that successfully got through. That message being, ‘What are the Garanth trying to accomplish here?’ The reply from the Beastmen, however, could only be determined as ‘A decision has been made to eliminate the entirety of the Evila’. Only that single intention of Evila’s

destruction was conveyed extremely clearly.

“Why...did it turn into a battle...?”

“It is most likely because it is the most effective method of persuasion.”

“How!? Why do we have to determine everything with strength?! Power is naturally unequal! Isn't it better if you use words that everybody possesses equally to debate rather than forcing people to submit with strength? If we talk things out, no blood will have to be spilled.”

“...Is that really the case?”

“What...do you mean?”

In response to Kiria's words of denial, the Demon Queen's eyes widened as she stared at Kiria.

“Words...are light.”

“—Tch!”

“Certainly, words are something that everyone has access to equally. However, in the first place, words are intrinsically empty in nature.”

“Empty...?”

“Yes. The heavy power of persuasion can be brought forth from those empty words. Not only can those words pass through a person's ears, but they can also be engraved into the minds of another. However, Eveam-sama, do you think such words without weight can avert war?”

“T-That's....”

“Perhaps in a peaceful world without war, if it was a negotiation conducted concerning business and trade, then perhaps Eveam-sama's method would be successful.”

“.....”

“However, this is war. People will undoubtedly die. War is not a trifle matter like negotiations in trade. It is most likely the greatest obstacle you will face. Are you able to face that obstacle and carry all the burdens and consequences of your decision?”

“That's.....”

“It seems that you are still too naïve to become a demon lord. Thus, the will of the previous demon king will be succeeded by many. To begin with, the Evila are abundant and strong; a battle-hardened race. Showing such weakness to your own kind will unlikely be able to quell their rage and anger those of your kind. Please take this into consideration...”

“That's enough.”

“...”

Eveam said as she ground her teeth and clenched her fists so hard that blood started dripping from them.

“I...just do not want to hurt anyone. Everyone is family to me. If that family begins to start fighting...how would that make anyone happy? But I...I’m powerless...”

From those strong-willed eyes, a single tear slid down her cheek. She is the ruler of this land and yet she was overwhelmed with despair. Her anger towards the world was far outweighed by her feelings of frustration with her own powerlessness.

“Then, should we lower our weapons and surrender?”

“..Eh?”

“It is possible that the Gabranth would understand our true motive.”

Although that proposal sounded rather attractive, Eveam could only frown anxiously. Looking at such an expression, Kiria remained indifferent as she continued.

“However, in the case where that proves ineffective, the Demon Race of Evila may be laid to ruin without being able to do anything.”

Should they surrender, the Demon Lord will most likely be taken as a token of victory. Being stripped of her power and status, the Demon Lord would be imprisoned and sealed until ultimately being thrown before the populace to have them decide upon her fate.

In a more positive scenario, the complete annihilation of the Evila can be prevented. However, even then the possibility of the captives being executed is very high.

Furthermore, since the Cruel Brigade is too powerful to suppress, they will be a concern for the rest of the world should they be left alive. In order to take responsibility, they may be executed to serve as an example to the rest of the world.

But if she didn’t surrender, a lot of blood will be shed. Even if the Evila are victorious, there is a high possibility that the other side will not accept surrender until the bitter end.

While pondering the circumstances as such, no matter whether she advances or withdraws, blood will still be spilled. Eveam’s face distorted into an expression of suffering as she gritted her teeth. Seeing such a face, Kiria lowered her head respectfully.

“I, Kiria, have made such insensitive remarks. Please designate the appropriate punishment for my insolence.”

“It is fine. What Kiria has told me is accurate and indisputable. There is no need for such a punishment.”

“...Very well. Then, I shall add one more thing in closing.”

“Eh?”

“Rest assured that I, Kiria, will follow Eveam-sama no matter where you may go.”

“Kiria...forgive me.”

For a short while, silence enveloped the atmosphere between them. However, in response to Kiria's words, Eveam's once gloomy face suddenly lifted.

"Have you decided?"

"Aa, I will protect Evila ! Kiria, I want you to lend me your strength."

Kiria: "...As you desire."

A strong will dwelled in those eyes. There was no more time for deliberating. There was no more time for hesitation. Therefore, all that could be done now was to use the remaining time to fulfil her objective.

"I will not allow my family to be slain!"

Stepping across the firm floor of the terrace, Eveam headed outside with Kiria following behind her.

Chapter 37: Capital of the Beast Kingdom, Passion

“What is wrong?” Aquinas, First Guard of the Demon Queen’s Cruel Brigade, asked.

Right before him was the Demon Queen Eveam, who let out a sigh.

He heard about her decision, but he didn’t know what the purpose was. The queen, Eveam stared at him intently and said, “I have a favour to ask from you, Aquinas.”

Kiria was also beside the queen staring intently at him.

“I have a few more concerns, but it looks like you have already made your decision.”

There was a glint of determination in her eyes, it was clear that whatever she planned to do had to do with the impending war.

“What is your request?”

“Well, it is...”

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Aquinas listened silently and soon after widened his eyes in surprise. To think that the queen would say something like that.

“I see, that is something that you will definitely be able to do, Your Majesty.”

Aquinas accepted the request like bitter medicine. If that is the solution Her Majesty struggled to bring about then it was fine with him.

“Actually, this is something that fits your personality.”

This was also one of the methods that Aquinas himself had considered before.

“Will you have no issues protecting this secret?”

Her personality of trusting others is both her weakness and her strength. That personality remained with

her ever since she was young and she never lost it since.

Even so, Aquinas believed that it was a great responsibility to everyone around her.

“How is it Aquinas?”

The queen wasn’t sure herself, but she felt she was able to make a connection and pass on her intent to him.

“Your decision won’t resolve anything?”

“Nonetheless, that is my decision.”

“.....”

Aquinas returned the queen’s gaze. He knew, dejectedly, that whatever he said from this point onward would not change her decision.

Interestingly, what happens to the queen as she goes about this mission, will be something to look forward to, Aquinas thought.

“Alright, please give me your orders.”

In response to those words, Eveam took a sharp breath. Because if he says something like that, then it is clear that he agrees with her and will go along with her decisions.

“You are the Demon Queen right?”

Eveam felt happiness from those words. Kiria was also faintly smiling behind her; she also rejoiced with the response.

“.....I understand, please work with me, Aquinas.”

Aquinas bent down on one knee and said.

“With pleasure.”

With this perhaps, the Beast King of the Gabranth, and the Demon Lord of the Evila can start getting along. It is not certain, but let’s celebrate it for now.

Capital of the Beast Kingdom, Passion. At the center of this city is a gigantic tree called, the Tree of Origin, Aragon . The whole city seemed to expand from there.

It was completely different from a man-made city. All the houses were made out of trees. The residents

just hollowed out a tree and lived in there.

There was also a sparkling stream flowing through the city. There were even small fish swimming casually in it. The city seemed to be built in complete harmony with nature.

As there was district named The King Tree, this was where all the royalty lived, with their castle-like dwellings made out of several large trees bunched together.

Nearby, there were numerous residents and travelers who were making offerings and prayers to the Tree of Origin, Aragon. The last king of Gabranth, selected that tree as a symbol for the Gabranth and built the city around it. To the Gabranth, the Tree of Origin, Aragon is a sacred entity to them.

Once a year, the Origin Festival takes place at the center of the town. Lots of people come from all around the world, especially children. At that time, if you climb the Tree of Orgin, you'll receive a blessing from the tree.

It is believed that the blessing from the Tree of Origin, Aragon will make the climber a strong, honorable and respectable person. Such rituals have become a tradition. Generally, it is for Gabranth children, but in the past there have been Humas who have climbed the tree as well.

The Tree of Origin is greatly revered by the Gabranth. Any other race who even touches the tree will incur the ceaseless wrath of the Gabranth.

“Well, that is what they say, either way never touch the tree in your human form.”

With how intense Arnold gave the warning, Hiiro who is currently disguised as a Gabranth using the word ability Copy, made sure to note it as something to be careful of. That is to never touch the tree in his human form.

“I see that's how it is. It is certainly a very large tree, but that is not the only reason right?”

While walking, Hiiro looked up at the tree; it was clearly over 200 meters tall, a ridiculous size for a tree. But Hiiro is unsure if you should appreciate a tree just because of its size.

“That is not all. I've heard that if you are sick with a disease or injury, if you just touch the tree it will heal you. If you have a baby that doesn't stop crying, if you bring the baby into the vicinity of the tree it will stop. There are other mysterious rumors about what the tree has done or is capable of.”

“Huh, is that it?”

“That's it. If anyone came to this city they will all be stunned by the magnificence of the Tree of Origin. It would be crazy not appreciate it.”

“That is mainly for the Gabranth right, but I'm a human.”

“...Well, that is true.”

That was all, but Hiiro thought there was more to it. Either way, the Tree of Origin, Aragon, was definitely something that the Gabranth would boast about.

Instead of hearing rumors about a tree, he wanted to know more information about what he wanted to do

here.

“That aside, you came here with a purpose right, to meet that someone?”

“Right, yes, I’ve received their treasured honey from those people, so I have to at least fulfill their request.”

“What, isn’t that the whole of point meeting the Werebears in the village?”(Arnold) “Yes, that was the point, but if they don’t get the honey won’t they be in a bad mood.”

Arnold thought that bringing the sweet honey would create a better mood for negotiations.

“Still, the Gabranth have already started marching to war. Are you sure the Werebears aren’t already out hunting with that group?”

The city seems to have a lot less people than usual. It is highly likely that all of those that can fight have already set off with the vanguard in preparation for war. Currently, there is a high chance that only a minimal defence force is in this area.

“Hmm, I wonder...”

“Hey, what do you mean? Do you mean the civilians?”

Unlike adventurers, ordinary citizens do not have enough strength to participate in a war. They are likely to continue living their ordinary lives.

However, Arnold shakes his head in denial.

“Well, certainly ordinary citizens don’t usually participate in a war, but many of us hunt and fight on a daily basis to fulfill our needs.”

“Is that true? It wasn’t a job for the soldiers?”

“Everything is voluntary, but the Gabranth are a warlike race and they usually gather without anyone asking.”

“That is the case but they responded?”

“Probably... The army made a desperate request...”

“So what? If someone rejected the request wouldn’t that be the end of it?”

“Yes, that would be the end of that. But there is also another problem.”

“What?”

“That aside, let’s finish one task first.”

“You are so full of yourself. So what’s next? What kind of person are we meeting?”

Muir looked at Arnold for a response. But for some reason Arnold was trembling as he was thinking of a response.

“What’s wrong?”

Seeing Muir ask that question, Arnold let out a sigh and said aloud.

“That person....is my master.”

Chapter 38: Arnold's Master

Before the party stood a residence similar to those in the area. However, it was much smaller than others. It also had a door, but unlike the other houses, it looked rough and scratched up. Overall, it looked like an old abandoned house.

Arnold went up to the house and knocked on the the door and frowned when there was no answer. There was a chance that the resident was pretending not to be home, mainly because it would be troublesome to deal with whoever was on the other side of the door.

With a light push the door opened with a creaking sound; the door was unlocked.

“Is is okay to enter without permission?”

Muir looked at Arnold with uncertainty and then he nodded in response.

“Well, look.”

“What?”

Arnold stuck out his finger and pointed at the bell hanging near the top of the inside of the door.

“What does the bell mean?”

“It’s my master’s habit. Whenever she heads out somewhere, my master always puts a bell on the door. Right now she is in.”

It does seem that way, since around the top of the door on both the interior and exterior there was something that looked like a hook, and a bell was hanging on the hook on the inside of the door.

“I see, so?”

“Well, it is just like Shishou¹⁷, she was probably out drinking and then fell asleep somewhere inside.”

With that said, they enter the house. Like Arnold said, the smell of alcohol was thick in the air. They wrinkled their noses; it was clear that there was no ventilation in the house.

“It smells so bad, for the moment let’s leave the door open.”

Looking inside, it could not be even called a house or even a barn, it was small enough to be labeled as a storage room. Nonetheless, there were a lot of bottles scattered on the floor and placed on the shelves. They could not feel any presence inside.

“What’s going on. Isn’t someone supposed to be here?”

His question was obvious, but the strong smell of alcohol put him in a bad mood.

“Ahh, it is fine, it is fine. From what I remember...”

Arnold started rearranging the items on the the shelves. After he finished rearranging a lever appeared.

“There, I found it.”

When Arnold pulled the lever, a small part of the floor slid away revealing a trapdoor. By lifting the ring-like handle, it revealed a pathway small enough for a person to fit in.

(What is this, a ninja house? That aside, why was such mechanism installed?) The reason for creating something like this was worrisome, but looking closer there seemed to be a ladder leading down from the pathway. It looked like the trapdoor led to the basement of the house.

“Oi, Ossan. There is no way...”

“Wait, she is down here. I am sure of it.”

“It makes me wonder what kind of person lives in this kind of place.”

“I.. I’m also interested as well.”

Their conversation faded slowly as they lost themselves in thought about who might live here.

“Well, you’ll know when you meet her.”

Arnold started heading down the ladder.

“Well, let’s go.”

“Yes, I guess?”

Both Hihiro and Muir cautiously followed Arnold down the ladder.

The inside was lot bigger than expected. More like there were several openings in the room which looked like tunnels made by large ants. If a dubious person wondered carelessly in this area, then there was a chance that they’ll get lost.

There were also bottles on the floor, but he just ignored them and started looking around. Right cavern, right cavern, left cavern, middle cavern, left cavern. Arnold proceeded like that through all the caverns in the area until finally he found the correct room and motioned the rest of the group to come over.

When they entered the room they saw what looked like a science lab. Various organic specimens decorated the room. There were also jars with strange liquids on the shelves.

(Incredible, instead of just a science lab, this looks like a research facility.) Hihiro looked around the area restlessly, lost in thought. At that moment, Arnold stopped. Wondering what happened, Hihiro looked in front of where Arnold was. There in a makeshift bed, someone was sleeping in it.

Guga¹⁸~... Guga~... Guga~...

The loud snoring can be clearly heard.

When the other two saw Arnold's master, they were shocked. When Arnold saw this he looked as his master with an exasperated expression. To think that this was his master...

But it was the truth. His master, who was wearing only a white lab coat and underwear, was sleeping soundly with a bottle of alcohol.

Oh my.....this is a little girl.

“Oi, Shishou.....are you awake...?”

As by instinct, Arnold said immediately.

"It's alright, it's alright, I know what you are thinking but I'm telling you are wrong."

“Why, then, is there little girl in such a dimly lit place. She looks no more than 5 years old.”

“Well, a lot of things could have happened. This person is my master you know.”

“Really, is this true?”

“Uwaaaaaaaaa.” Muir looked at him with the same suspicious eyes.

“It is true isn’t it? You are a lolicon.”

“Dammit Hiirō! I told you that is completely wrong. I’m normal!”

[illegible]

A sudden voice shouted like a siren causing everyone to cover their ears in surprise. Then, they looked at where the voice came from.

“So loud! I’ll personally deal with whoever is causing this ruckus... Arnold is that you?”

“Oh, hi, nice to see you again, Shishou.”

Arnold's face twitched as he made the greeting.

“So, let me start the introductions. This person here is my master, her name is Rarashik Fan’naru. Well that is about all, as you can see.”

Abruptly, a slipper smacked him across his head sending him sprawling along the floor. Muir was surprised when she saw it happen. Hiiro on the other hand, casually observed that she had a lot of

strength.

“Who do you think you are, saying ‘that is all’, you are so full of yourself Arnold-boya.”

“Huff. That was cruel Shishou.”

“Ignoring my orders and heading out by yourself, I don’t want to be called Shishou by someone like that!”

Coming out her small mouth, it didn’t sound scary at all. However, Arnold had an expression of complete dread. He felt that he was in a terrible situation.

“To head to the Humas continent at that time, what were you thinking?”

“But, Shishou...”

“Why didn’t you bring me along?”

“.....What?”

“How dare you leave your master in a lonely place like this? Do you know how much I suffered?”

*Pakeshi*²⁰

With that, Arnold’s head smacked into the ground again from the impact.

(What is going on with this little girl...?)

Because of the unreasonable remarks and actions, Hihiro looked at the little girl carefully. She had green hair that was bunched together in the shape of an ‘O’ on the back of her head. From his first impression she looked like a grade schooler with her height and looks. The most distinguishing part of her is the long ears at the top of her head.

(From those ears, she would be said to be of the Wererabbit race right?) Drawing from his memory, with the green hair and long ears, she had all the characteristics of the Wererabbit race.

In addition to that, there were so many more interesting things to look into. For example, why does Arnold call her master? If so, then there should be a considerable age difference? Yet the appearance, the cellar-like house, the research facility-like room. What she is doing or who she is was a complete mystery.

(I’m not interested in this individual...but I’m interested in finding out what she does exactly.) It was the first time Hihiro saw a Wererabbit like her, but from what he read from an illustrated book, there were no Wererabbits like her.

(Is it a ‘mutant’? Or is there just a problem with her growth?) While thinking, Hihiro was disrupted by an unpleasant stare from Rarashik.

“What is wrong boya? You shouldn’t stare at a girl like that? Or could it be that you have an interest in this body?”

With a mean grin, he half-heartily listened and responded with casual voice.

“Do you think I would be interested in such an undeveloped body? I’m not a lolicon like Arnold.”

“Hey, idiot Hiiro.”

Arnold raised his voice, and saw beside him the trembling body of Rarashik. He started sweating all over.

“Hey.... Arnold.”

“Ye-Yes!”

He stood stiffly like a soldier.

“Oi, brat, do you want to do an experiment?”

Rarashik said through her teeth with a villainous grin. Seeing so, Arnold started sweating even more.

“Nah, I don’t want to.”

It isn’t as if Arnold hasn’t considered the ‘experiment’ but if Rarashik rampaged now it was clear he will also receive some damage. He stood there and quickly took out a bag.

“S-Shishou. Here!”

The moment she saw the object inside the bag, her faced turned from one of wrath to one of happiness immediately.

“Isn’t that Honey Drop ?”

The moment he handed her the bag, she pulled it toward her chest as if it was a precious treasure.

Arnold finally let out a relieved breath when he saw her mood get better.

“Why, oh why? If you had something like this why didn’t you bring it out earlier?”

“We-Well, my bad...”

Arnold quickly wiped the sweat on his head and put on a exhausted smile.

“Hmm, so why are you here and who are those two behind you?”

“Finally, we can get a real talk going....”

Arnold proceeded to tell her about what kind of connection he had with Hiiro and Muir. While listening silently, Rarashik stared at the other two.

“Hmm, for an idiot like you be able to find companions.”

It was unclear if it was complement or an insult, but even then there was a smile. However, there was a boy who couldn’t read the atmosphere.

“That is wrong, we are just fellow travelers.”

Rarashik looked at Hihiro with a blank face. The remaining two just shook their heads in exasperation. It was fine just being a fellow traveler but it was just like Hihiro to say it like that.

“Traveler? What are you saying? You are not companions?”

“Well that is...”

Hihiro summarized the time he spent with Arnold’s party. Of course, he made sure to leave Word Magic out.

“Oh, isn’t that okay? As the teacher or Arnold, wouldn’t it be fine for me to join your party?”

“Nah, we don’t need a little girl like you.”

At that moment, the air between them seemed to crack with electricity. Arnold couldn’t help but regret bringing Hihiro along.

“You arrogant bastard. You who hasn’t even lived a tenth of my life, do you want to die?”

“If you can do it go ahead!”

But at that moment, Hihiro felt cold steel at his neck.

(What? No way....!?)

Before he could react, Rarashik was behind him with a small knife, pressed against his neck. Muir was so surprised that she wasn’t able to say anything. Arnold just let out a sharp breath and watched.

“You see? I am not just little girl, nor do I have an undeveloped body. Even though I look like this I’ve lived for over 200 years. The next time you call me a little girl, I’ll turn you into a human experiment. Understood?”

After saying that she returned to her original position. Hihiro felt a unpleasant drop of sweat flow down his head. His whole body felt a very strong killing intent.

(I had no idea what happened...if she was serious I would have been...) Without touching his neck, he could feel his heart pounding. It was as if he barely escaped with his life. From that sensation, he realized, for the first time, the terror that resided in this world.

(These kind of people exists, huh... A person I can’t even react to...such a person.) If he used Word Magic before the encounter he might have been alright. If he used the word Vision, he would be able to see the other person’s movements, if he used the word Speed he might have been able to react.

Even then, Hihiro knew that if that person fought for real, he was guaranteed to die either way.

Chapter 39: The Unstoppable War

“Were you surprised? Even though Shishou looks like that, she’s at the SSS rank. Wait, I think that was a while ago..?”. ”

“Fun! Even if it’s been a long time since I’ve been active, a midget like you wouldn’t even be a decent warm up.”

Rarashik said as she laughed. Hiiro felt frustrated. However, he could not say anything. In reality, he couldn’t even lift a finger against her. And to think she wasn’t even using her full power.

(What a monster...to think these kinds of people were called top rankers.) Even if they’re human, can an SSS-ranker be this powerful? As if reading Hiiro’s thoughts, Arnold began to explain.

“They’re strong. The difference between a person with an SS rank and one with an SSS rank is significantly huge. Honestly, the only people that can obtain an SSS rank are freaks of nature.”

“Who you callin’ a freak?”

*Punyuchi~tss*²¹

Ignoring Arnold whose face was buried in the ground, Hiiro looked back at Rarashik.

(Should I use it? The word Pry ...?)

If he used the word Pry he would be able to view the target’s status. He was tempted to use it in order to obtain an absolute numerical evaluation of her strength. But in order to use the skill, he would have to write the word. If he were to be seen...no. Without a doubt, Hiiro was convinced that he would be noticed before he could even initiate the skill.

He really wanted to confirm her abilities, however, if his strange movements attracted her attention and caused her to be cornered, that would be the end. Thus, he decided to stop for now. Hiiro determined that a chance will definitely arise at a later date. This was definitely the first time that Hiiro displayed any signs of weakness.

“A-Alright then. I kinda want to get the conversation going so...Hiiro, don’t do anything unnecessary, okay?”

Hiiro remained silent. Seeing this rare sight, Arnold’s eyes widened.

(To be able to get that Hiiro to shut up, my Shishou is impressive as always.) Thinking so, Arnold turned his gaze towards Rarashik.

“Actually, Shishou, I want to ask you a few things about the war.”

Hearing this, Rarashik’s face instantly became hostile. She gave him a glare that made Arnold jump in

panic.

“I don’t believe it, but are you guys saying you want to go off to war as well?”

“Eh? Ah, no, that’s not what I’m trying to say... but when you say it like that, then it’s as we thought. A war is starting, right?”

“The question’s not whether there will be a war or not, our forces should’ve already reached the border by now.”

“Seriously?! Then what’s gonna happen to this continent now?”

“Who knows?”

“Master!? What do you mean, ‘Who knows!’?”

“If war has already started then there isn’t much you can do about it. Unless, Arnold, you want to try and persuade the king to withdraw?”

“T-That’s kinda...”

There was no way for a group of mere adventurers would even get a hearing. However, it also didn’t feel right to leave the issue as it was and continue to act as a bystander.

“What happens, happens. The thing about war is that it can only end when one side is declared the loser. But I doubt that the Evila or the Gabranth will surrender.”

“So you say, but we’re talking about a war. Wouldn’t it leave the world in ruins?”

“Well, seeing how we rushed into war in such a state, we will never know when it will end. The days of rigorous everyday battles may continue indefinitely.”

“Earlier, I’m pretty sure you said that they are already at the border...”

Arnold took a map out of his pocket as he inspected the layout of the continents.

The Gabranth continent was connected to the Evila continent by a bridge. It was very similar to the bridge that connected the Humas and Gabranth continents. However, the structure and materials of the bridges were completely different.

The bridge that connected the Humas and Gabranth continents was 10km long and 10 meters wide.

However, the bridge that connected the Gabranth continent to the Evila continent was 30km long and 30m wide. Furthermore, it was constructed out of a special ore called **Xrude Ore** which boasted supreme toughness and was incredibly firm.

There was even a rumor about an SSS-ranker that used such an ore to create a sword that slaughtered countless monsters. Ever since such a rumor was confirmed, the usefulness of the Xrude Ore was substantiated and irrefutable.

The reason behind the substantial difference in structure and material of the bridges is quite lengthy. Once

upon a time the Humas and Gabranth worked together to create a bridge just as long and wide as the Gabranth-Evila Bridge. However, there were numerous strong and powerful sea monsters that attacked the bridge. The people managed to fend those monsters off for some time but eventually it collapsed from the relentless onslaught.

Construction of a more robust bridge was undertaken with incremental progress over the years. Ever since its completion, it continues to withstand attacks from sea monsters, remaining firm and reliable as it provides safe passage from one continent to the other.

“The Gedult Bridge, huh...if they cross that, then it’ll turn into a full blown war...”

“Yeah, and it’s looking like it’ll happen real soon..”

Hearing Rarashik’s words, Muir’s face showed a dejected expression.

“Why....Why would they start a war?”

“Muir...”

Arnold gently rubbed Muir’s head. Upon seeing Arnold committing such an act, Rarashik began teasing Arnold. “Hou~ If you do something like that, it’ll look like she really is your daughter.”

“Of course. Muir really is my daughter.”

“...He~”

In reality Rarashik expected Arnold to grow flustered at her teasing, and was genuinely impressed with Arnold as he calmly made that declaration.

“You’ve grown up a bit, didn’t ya? Arnold-boya.”

“Of course, I’m already 37 this year.”

“Hahaha! True, true, so you’re finally at that age huh?”

In the face of her unbridled laughter, Arnold stared at her with half-opened eyes.

“More importantly, why didn’t Shishou go to war? Were you not invited?”

“Hmm? Of course I was. Isn’t it a given that I was invited?”

“So? You didn’t go?”

“I have no interest in fighting a losing battle.”

“A losing battle?! There’s no way to know that at this point....”

“Who do you think I am? Of course I can tell.”

“...Haa? But our king isn’t so stupid that he would start a war with no chance of victory, right?”

“Well, it seems that the King has something up his sleeve. Besides, it seems that my damn brother went

with him.”

“Your brother did?”

“Aa, because my damn brother was there, they were capable of going to war.”

“Well, your brother was the one behind the creation of the Binding skill.”

Muir and Hihiro, having no idea what they were talking about, tilted their heads to the side with a puzzled expression. Noticing their confusion, Arnold immediately gave an apologetic smile.

“My bad, my bad. Shishou’s brother is a researcher for this kingdom. He’s the one responsible for devising the method of using the Binding skill.”

“That method involves this bracelet...but—”

Rarashik showed them the bracelet fitted on her wrist. It was the same bracelet that Arnold and Muir had. It seems that the person that created those bracelets was Rarashik’s brother.

“I’m pretty sure it was called...the Nameless Bracelet, right?”

“Aa, although if the owner is able to establish a contract with a spirit, the bracelet will be granted a name.”

Arnold contracted with a wind spirit so his bracelet became a Bracelet of Wind. Muir contracted with a thunder spirit so her bracelet became a Bracelet of Thunder.

“This bracelet allows one to draw upon the Binding skill during battle. By the way, the person that conceived the Binding skill was Shishou.”

Hearing this info, Hihiro was honestly surprised. He could not believe that the person who gave the Gabranth the ability to fight with magic was the person right in front of him.

(Actually, considering the movements she displayed earlier...)

Seeing Rarashik placing her hands on her hips and puffing out her chest proudly, Hihiro felt the bitter emotions he had earlier resurfacing.

“Oji-san, you became the disciple of a really amazing person!”

Muir, deeply moved by what Rarashik accomplished, rejoiced by raising both of her hands in the air.

“Nahahaha! Keep praising me little lady! Nothing will come from it, though.”

Seeing his master passionately laughing due to her good mood, Arnold became slightly embarrassed, his cheek stiffening as his face contorted into a wry smile.

“...Haha, so, Shishou? Continuing where we left off, what makes you think that they are going to lose? Don’t they have the Binding skill that you developed? Even with that, you wouldn’t be able to say whether they are going win or lose.”

“Are you an idiot?!”

“An idiot!?”

Due to the sudden insult, Arnold involuntarily repeated her words.

“For the Gabranth who are unable to use magic, being able to use the Binding skill would definitely be something that the Evila will not be able to overlook so easily.”

“T-Then!?”

“Even so, abilities and the history of magic itself are two different things.”

“Magic history, huh?”

“I think I get it. So to summarize....”

Before Hiiro could conclude his summary, Rarashik’s eyes lit up with sparkled curiosity. It seemed that it couldn’t be helped, but to voice his thoughts about her now before he could move the conversation along.

“...You’re a chibi-usagi.”

“What kind of summary is that!?”

Arnold plunged in with a tsukkomi. The person in question, however, having her expectations popped like a balloon, began to laugh uncontrollably..

“Nahahaha! That’s certainly a great summary, mean-eyed-boya!”

As if stuck onto a key point of Hiiro’s summary, Rarashik was holding her stomach as she convulsed into laughter. Hiiro obviously raised his eyebrows, making an expression that seemed to ask, ‘Something the matter?’ In face of Rarashik’s sudden laughter, both Muir and Arnold could only tilt their heads in amazement.

“Nahaha! You are an interesting fellow, ain’t ya! Well, you’re free to call me what you want. As long as it’s not ‘little girl’, I’ll make an exception just for you.”

“Ho-oh, Ossan, your shishou has a quite an unfathomable depth of character, huh.”

“Kora! What’s that supposed to mean!?”

“Of course! Don’t compare me to a fellow like Arnold who resembles a decrepit old man!”

“W-Wait, Shishou!?”

‘You’re obviously the older one here, Shishou!’ was what Arnold wanted to say, however, he obviously could not say it even if his tongue was ripped out. If he did, he would undoubtedly wind up kissing the ground again.

“So? You were in the middle of saying something, right?”

Ignoring Arnold, Rarashik asked Hiiro.

“Well, magic has a very long history. Research from various areas and subjects have been conducted on various magics to improve its power and effectiveness. Compared to that the Binding skill was created fairly recently, correct?”

Rarashik said that she had thought of the skill, however, she herself, who had only lived for over 200 years, did not think that the history of Binding was very long. That said, the history of Binding magic could only be about 100-150 years in length..

“If experience was a stat that could be used to determine fighting capability, the difference between traditional magic and our Binding is certainly quite overwhelming. Compared to the fleshed-out traditional magic, Binding has pretty much just entered its development phase.”

Listening to Hiiro’s calculated response, Arnold inhaled sharply as he redirected his gaze towards Rarashik.

“You’re pretty smart, ain’t ya. What was your name?”

“...Hiiro, Okamura.”

“Okamura? That’s a pretty strange name. It seems like you’re the little girl’s brother or relative, but...?”

Giku— Arnold started trembling. It was clear that Rarashik noticed that Muir’s hair that protruded out of her knit cap and Hiiro’s hair are of the same tint. She assumed that due to this similarity that Muir and Hiiro were siblings.

As Arnold was at a lost to how he should respond to this, Hiiro spoke up.

“We are of the same race, but not necessarily siblings.”

“Fun, the same race, huh.”

Rarashik compared the two of them as if she was searching for something.

(Let’s see... that silver-blue hair and those ears... no, that couldn’t be. If that was the case, then that ear shape should be slightly different...) As soon as she determined that it was no longer possible, she discarded that idea. Immediately following that, she chuckled to herself before she once again laid her eyes upon Hiiro.

“Well, whatever. It is just as you said, boya. Do you get it, Arnold?”

“Um, the Binding skill which has a shallow history, can’t win against magic?”

“That’s a given. The Evila will be able to use magic that Binding users will not be able to use. Compared to them our magic is inferior.”

“But Shishou’s level of Binding is different, right?”

“Well, I’m the one who thought of it after all. After me would probably be...just the King.”

“Wait a minute! What about the Three Beast Saints?”

(Nn? The Three Beast Saints)

Hearing an interesting word appear, Hihiro raised his eyebrows.

“Isn’t it obvious? They’re all just snot-nosed brats if you ask me.”

“Snot-nosed...you know that they’re very influential people of this kingdom..”

Hou~ Hihiro felt something click as he gained an understanding due to Arnold’s words.

(Even among the Gabranth, there are people who are classified as being in the top class...huh? The Three Beast Saints? If presumably there are only 3 of them, that’s not a very notable amount.) It seemed that, according to Arnold, the Three Beast Saints were ranked next to the king in terms of combat ability and influence. In Rarashik’s eyes, however, she seemed to have deemed them as ‘snot-nosed brats’.

“Well, leaving out the whole snotty brats thing, the number of people that can bring out the true power of the Binding skill besides me is only 1. Incidentally, they’re one of the people that are heading off to war. Do you really think those amateurs who take the lead in this war will stand a chance against the Evila?”

Arnold was left unable to reject those words. From first-hand experience, he can attest to the Binding skill’s strength. However, he also knew that he wasn’t able to realize the skill’s full potential. If you apply Arnold’s situation to Rarashik’s explanation, the obvious conclusion drawn is that all the Beastmen are unable to fully utilize the Binding skill.

Those handicapped Gabranth are going to fight the Evila, who have studied and compiled their knowledge of magic, to the point of being able to use their magic like their own limbs. What Rarashik was trying to convey was that it was correct to assume that the Gabranth will not be able to stand a chance against the Evila.

“It’s too soon. It’s way too soon to be stirring up trouble with them.”

Putting her hands in her white lab coat’s pockets, Rarashik let out an exasperated breath.

“So, you tried to stop them, Shishou?”

“If I was talking to people that listened then maybe I could have convinced them... It’s just that everyone was so enthusiastic about being able to use magic with the Binding skill for the first time. There will always be someone stronger no matter how strong you get.”

“To think that Shishou’s words couldn’t stop them..”

“Well, to them, I’m just a former martial arts teacher. I don’t have that much authority in the first place. If I had some achievements under my belt like my damn father, perhaps they may have heeded my warnings.”

“Is that so...? No, I think what Shishou has achieved so far is definitely something worth respecting.”

The ability to bring out the Gabranth hidden potential by using the Binding skill is already a great feat. However, in Rarashik’s eyes, something of that level was probably not what she would consider an

accomplishment.

“In any case, this is a war. It’d be nice if we are able to return from it without experiencing something tragic...”

True, this was not a measly quarrel. This is for the Gabranth to measure the power of the Evlia, to find their own weaknesses and learn something from it. There is a high probability that they will experience something painful before retreating to safety.

“Sadly, the Gabranth are simple and naive. There is a possibility that they may get wiped out.”

“N-No way...”

Muir voiced her dismay as her face grew pale. If the Gabranth army was annihilated, there is a high chance that the end of the Gabranth would draw closer. Even if the Evila retreated, there is a chance that the Humas would take the opportunity to invade.

In the event that they do invade, the Gabranth would be enslaved by the Humas. Realizing this, both Muir and Arnold felt a shiver run down their spines.

Arnold and Muir knew all too well that the true horror of the Humas wasn’t their strength or their magic prowess, but their desire for domination, control and greed. It is because of this that a future enslavement to them had to be prevented at all costs.

“I-Is there nothing we can do?”

“Didn’t I say it before? All we can do is let things run their course.”

“Y-Yes, but...”

“Or what? Do you plan on joining the war effort in order to prevent enslavement? With those puny arms?”

Even though Rarashik’s words were harsh, they were indisputably correct. No matter what he would do, the situation would remain unchanged. Involvement in the war effort would only bring about several more corpses of Evila soldiers. In the worst case, it would only increase the number of Gabranth bodies.

Seeing Arnold clenching his teeth, Rarashik could only let out sigh.

“Well, we won’t be able to completely stop the flames of war, but in theory, we can delay the opening spark.”

“R-Really!?”

Arnold tried to think of a method to delay the war, but he was unable to come up with anything. He had given up and thought that there would be no way to do something like that.

“Kind of. If it works, both sides will stay put.”

“What method is it?”

“Didn’t I say? This is only a theory?”

“Eh?”

“It seems that neither side is likely to benefit from it. And even then, we need to find someone capable of doing it...”

Arnold brought his hand to his chin, tilting his neck as he stared at Rarashik.

“E-Exactly what kind of method is this?”

“...Hmm? I think that boya over there already knows, right?”

Saying this, Rarashik’s casual gaze laid upon Hiiro’s reflection. He held his arms crossed over his chest in an uninterested manner, however, after being spoken to, Hiiro turned his gaze toward Rarashik. Facing her, he spoke.

“Aa.”

Hearing Hiiro’s expression of affirmation, Muir and Arnold’s jaws dropped in disbelief.

“Hou~”

Rarashik grinned in admiration.

“Oi Hiiro? Are you serious?”

“Yeah, although I’m beginning to wonder how much of that you understood. Were you asleep the whole time, Ossan?”

“Nahahahaha! To be treated like that by someone younger than you, you should be ashamed, Arnold!”

“Gununununu.... Argh, whatever! I don’t care anymore! Tell me already!”

As Hiiro noticed Muir’s curious, glittering eyes staring at him as if pleading him to teach her what he had realized, ‘Ha~’ Hiiro could only sigh.

“Why don’t you say it boya? I want to see if you’ve actually got the right idea.”

Seeing Rarashik’s playful smile that felt like she was testing him, Hiiro felt pissed. However, even if he remained silent, the other two’s stares started to become a nuisance. Therefore, Hiiro reluctantly began his explanation.

“...Ha~ Listen carefully, got it? That method is....”

Chapter 40: War Commences! And a Sudden Development!?

Gedalt Bridge . It was the only bridge connecting the Gabranth and Evila continents. And at this very moment, from both sides of the bridge, the Gabranth and Evila glared at one another.

“Those bastards. I was sure that they would deploy their troops to our side already...”

The person who muttered that was Beast Kingdom Passion ’s King, and the one serving as supreme commanding officer of the country’s forces: Leowald King. His gallant mane flowed in the wind as his sharp lion-like eyes stared at the other side of the bridge.

He had acted under the assumption that the Evila would station their troops on this side to prevent them from crossing. But it appears he was mistaken “Damn, if only they were on our side of the bridge, I would make mincemeat out of them.”

The person saying this with a regretful expression was the second prince, Lenion.

“As expected of war. Not everything will go as planned...”

For a different reason than Lenion, the first prince Leglos also had a regretful expression.

“Father, what should we do? They’ve positioned quite a force on that side. I believe it would be best to wait and see what move they will make.”

“Yes, this is still within expectations. We’ll keep to our initial plan. First... we’ll use that.”

Upon those words, the people surrounding him gave off dangerous smiles.

“Are the preparations ready, Yuhito!?”

Upon calling the name, a man in a white lab coat appeared behind him.

“Nyohohohoho! We’re ready whenever you are! Let’s confirm the results of my research to our hearts content! Nyohohohoho!”

His hair was unkempt and his coat was worn out. The man wearing spiraling glasses and giving off a generally dirty disposition gave off a loud laugh.

“Good, then release the first Decaying Legions !”

“Nyohohohoho! Crouch, do it!”

A black panther Beastman with his entire body covered in black stood before everyone.

“Understood-nya.”

He placed his arms on the ground in front of the bridge.

“Now, it’s time for work-nya. Come out-nya.”

The bracelet on Crouch’s arm gave off a dubious light.

Zuzuzuzuzuzuzuzzuzuzuzu...

The shadow around his feet gradually increased in size. And from then, the shapes of monsters began to form. However, those were no ordinary monsters.

Various parts of their bodies were eroded away and their skin was festering. A smell of decay enough to break one’s nose permeated the air. But the monsters’ eyes did give off a sense of life along with a red light.

Monsters endlessly poured out of the shadows. And with a casual pace, they start spanning the bridge.

“Nyohohoho! Go forth! My immortal zombie legions!”

At that time, on the other side, having seen the Gabranth’s movements, the soldiers reported to the one who requested Demon Lord Eveam to put him in that position: Cruel’s Second Rank, Marione.

“I see, I see. So they began moving. Those filthy brutes, I’ll send them to oblivion!”

Bloodlust, powerful enough that even the soldiers on his side trembled in fear, surged through his body. Both his wife and child had been killed by the Gabranth. For that reason, he had an insatiable rage directed at the beast race.

The reason he personally asked to participate on the front lines was because he believed it would allow him to slaughter as many Beastmen as possible.

“...Marione-sama”

“Oh, what is it, Chugay?”

The one who suddenly appeared behind him was a man called Chugay. On his head was a single, long horn. Like a mask, his face never showed a change in emotion.

“It seems they’re employing monsters as their front line. What course of action do you wish to take?”

“Hmm, from what I’ve heard, one of their researchers discovered a way to get monsters to fight for them.”

“It appears that was true. There are some Rank S monsters among them.”

“Hmm, did they think they could do anything with some measly Rank S’s?”

“I believe they are disposable pieces to elicit a reaction from us.”

“That means that there’s a high possibility they have much stronger monsters with them. Hmm, those beasts desperately scrambled for power due to their declining forces. They gained some unnecessary knowledge.”

He clicked his tongue in an annoyed manner.

“Marione-sama.”

“Hmm?”

“Please grant me, Chugay, a part in this. Let me determine whether the forces those filthy beasts put together will be a threat or not.”

Upon receiving those words, Marione laughed.

“Fine. But stop at the monsters. The Beasts will... be killed by my hand.”

“Understood!”

Chugay vanished into thin air.

“Watch closely, damn brutes. I’ll exterminate every last one of you.”

“How’s the situation?”

As Leowald posed the question to Yuhito, he laughed as he responded.

“Nyohohohoho! It appears they only sent one person! But he seems to be quite skillful! Nyohohohoho!”

“So they’re going to engage us in the middle of the bridge. What’s more, with one person? Who is he?”

“I used my precious Zombie-chans’ eyes to observe him. It seems they sent Chugay!”

“Father, I believe Chugay was Marione’s subordinate.”

Leglos commented and Leowald opened his eyes a bit wider.

“I see, so one of the Cruel is in command.”

“They’ve already sent out the Demon Lord’s personal fighting force, the Cruel. What’s more, Marione should be Second Rank . For such a person to be on the front lines... is there a reason?”

“Nyohohoho! Based on my research, he harbors a great hatred for Beastmen!”

“So that’s it, he wants to reap our lives with his own hands... that’s probably his intention.”

Leowald’s words were right on the mark.

“If it’s just Chugay, the monsters should be able to hold him off, but what should we do?”

“I’ll²² go forward.”

“Lenion.”

“I can’t laze around forever. Someone needs to open the way, right?”

“Wait a second, Lenion, there’s no reason for a prince to set out yet.”

“Aniki, this is war. If you want to win, you’ve got to use whatever you’ve got. Luckily, my Binding is perfect for use in open places like this.”

Lenion glanced at the bridge that extended in a straight line.

“Also, if they’re just monsters, it doesn’t matter if I drag them into my attacks too, right? Well, perhaps the soldiers would be satisfied if they were to die by my attacks.”

Looking at his ferocious smile, Leglos thought to himself, ‘If his heart was just a little warmer, Lenion would be a better prince than him.’

Based on ability, Lenion’s was higher. In the Beastman world that put strength above all else, the next King would have been him. Regrettably, his personality was not one that was well-liked.

He was too militaristic and he didn’t care for the people. He would be a disgrace as a King.

“Oy, Old Man, whatcha gonna do? Can I go out?”

Hearing Lenion’s words, Leowald thought for a second.

“...Understood. But wait for a second.”

As he said those words, the soldiers who were observing the bridge raised their voices.

“What’s wrong!?”

Leowald shouted out, thinking that perhaps the other side had made some drastic movements.

“Ah, no, something from the other side...”

Upon the soldier’s words, everyone redirected their gazes.

“What do you mean by something...?”

They concentrated their attention on the other side of the bridge. And above it, two things were floating in midair.

“What... are those...?”

That was the question on everyone’s mind.

“What’s going on!?”

Marione’s angry voice cried out. The reason for this was because unrest was breaking out among the soldiers and the camp was getting noisy.

“Did something happen to Chugay?”

That was what came to his mind. He had left taking care of the monsters to him because he asked. Could it be that he lost?

“N-No...”

The soldier’s faces were pale. Some of them have blank expressions. It’s as if they saw something they couldn’t believe.

“All of you! If something happened, explain it!”

“Y-Yess!”

Marione’s wrath returned them to their senses. They kneeled before him and explained the events that had transpired. And upon hearing their words, Marione’s expression gradually stiffened.

“What do you mean!?”

“Hii!”

“Why did something like that happen!?”

“I-I-I doooooooooon’t know!”

The soldiers desperately responded, but nothing entered Marione’s ears anymore. His mind was in disorder from the words he just heard.

He turned his eyes to the space above the bridge to confirm it. There were definitely two things there.

(W-Why... what does this mean...?)

He gritted his teeth and he murmured to himself.

“Why are those two people here...?”

Both sides had noticed the existence of the two things. They were both enquiring as to what their purpose was. The things floated to the very center of the bridge and stopped.

Both of the things were, as the Evila side surmised, people. The first had beautiful golden hair and was lightly clad in red armor. It was Eveam. The second had blood-red hair and was wearing pitch black armor. It was Aquinus. Both of them had sprouted large wings from their backs.

Both turned their eyes to the battle below, between the zombie monsters and Marione's subordinate, Chugay. Chugay noticed their presence and was dumbfounded that the existence he was fighting to defend boldly wandered onto the battlefield.

"Fall back, Chugay!"

Eveam commanded so, but Chugay had no idea what was going on. His mind could not keep up with the sudden development. He never heard that anything of the sort was set to happen and even though she was accompanied by First Rank Aquinus, for the Demon Lord to nonchalantly come out was just reckless.

"If you don't want to get involved in this, step back."

In an indifferent voice, Aquinus spoke, but to Chugay Aquinus wasn't his master. He didn't take orders from him. For him, Marione was the one deserving of being First Rank .

So he honestly did his part by defying Aquinus's orders. But seeing his immobility, Eveam angrily shouted at him.

"Just move it already! The Demon Lord is ordering you here!"

"Y-Yes!"

Even he couldn't defy the Demon Lords's words. If he did, then the responsibility of his actions would fall to Marione. But still, this place was left to him, so he was a bit dissatisfied with leaving without an explanation.

"I'll leave explanations for later. Just get out of here quickly! Also relay my command, let no one else get close to here!"

He understood not the intent of Eveam's words, but an erratic situation was playing out before him. He determined that he would have to report it to Marione, so he sprouted wings from his back and departed.

"Are you ready, Aquinus?"

"Yeah."

And the two lowered their backs and drew their swords. For some reason, those blades found themselves lodging into their wielder's left arms. From their cut arms, a large amount of blood flowed. The blood dripped steadily towards the ground.

“Let me ask again. You're sure about this, right?”

Aquinas inquired and while Eveam's face was stiff, she responded in a strong voice.

“Yeah, I've already decided.”

She lifted up her bloody left arm and above her head, a large magic circle manifested. Her blood was drawn towards that magic circle and dyed it red.

Aquinas flew up higher than that circle and held his left arm towards the ground. A similar magic circle appeared before him. The two circles were separated by exactly 30 meters. Aquinus's blood was also absorbed into his circle, his circle turning red.

All of a sudden, a sound like that of the earth rumbling sounded out. The clear sky suddenly became clouded with dark clouds and lightning began racing across it.

In between the two circles, a black mass came forth. Black lightning surged around it as it gradually got larger.

And from both sides, people began to realize exactly for what purpose the two had appeared.

Chapter 41: Interruption of the War

“W-What is that tremendous magic power!? I-Is it the Demon Lord!?”

On the Gabranth side, witnessing the actions of Eveam and Aquinas, Leglos judged that it was indeed the work of the Demon Lord.

“Yeah. This amount of magic power, there’s no mistake.”

In the face of such an extreme amount of magic power surpassing his own, even Lenion was clenching his teeth. His hands naturally became sweaty.

“Nyohohohoho! Well now, this is bad!”

“What is it, Yuhito? What’s bad? Because they’re going to fire it in this direction?”

As Lenion asks, Yuhito shakes his finger.

“Non non. If that were the case, they’d have to be closer in order to annihilate us. But they stopped at the middle of the bridge, yes!”

“...You can’t mean!?”

King Leowald gasps as Yuhito confirmed what he wanted to say.

“That’s correct. I’m afraid they...”

“To use such large magic... It can’t be!? N-No, but...”

On the Evila side, the very first to realize was Marione. Even though he came to that conclusion, however, he could not believe it.

“To think Her Majesty would do such a thing...”

Among the soldiers, there are those that are impressed feeling the enormous magic power. They did not understand what was going to happen, but they are deeply moved witnessing the power of the one they were supposed to protect.

However, Marione was beside himself with worry. If those girls do what he thought they were going to

do, he thought that he must stop them.²³ However, there is no longer a way to stop them. The soldiers ask Marione what those girls plan to do.

He clenches his teeth and tells them as if spitting out his words.

“They are...”

“They need to destroy the bridge.”

Hihiro gives an answer to Rarashik’s question. Everyone aside from her, however, has a blank look on their faces.

“Oh, and your reasoning?”

“If they destroy the bridge then just as you said, it won’t be able to stop the war but it will delay it.”

“W-What do you mean?”

Arnold asks while furrowing his brow.

“Isn’t that so? That bridge is the only thing connecting the two continents, right?”

““...Ah!””

Both Arnold and Muir seem to understand what he said.

“I get it! Destroying the bridge will stop their advance!”

“Y-Yeah, and if everything goes well, then just like Shishou-san said, both sides may come out uninjured...”

Then, Rarashik grinned and started applauding.

“Congratulations. You’re a smart one, boy.”

“Hmph.”

Hihiro didn’t feel bad being complimented, but since he was done so while being looked down upon by a little girl, he felt conflicted.

“No, wait... There’s no merit for them if they do that...”

Arnold mutters while crossing his arms. To that, Muir asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Because, they’re at war. Especially because it was the Gabranth side that started it. It’s not likely that they’ll do something to lose their standing. There were rumors that the Evila were also plotting war. Rather, they’ve advanced across that bridge several times. The war this time around is a convenient turn of events for the Evila. Because the Gabranth are the ones that started it. They wouldn’t go out of their way and destroy the bridge, would they? Since the Evila are stronger anyway.”

“Ah, you’re right.”

“It’s like I said, right? Theoretically, it’s possible. But there’s no merit and someone that could destroy such a large bridge... Well, even if there were someone that could, he’d have to use close to all his power, so while it’s theoretically possible, there’s no one that would do it.”

The Gedult Bridge, having been destroyed in the past by monsters, has been developed so that such a thing would not occur again.

It may be possible to damage it a little, but something like completely destroying it would be difficult and there would be no reason to do so, so only the theory of doing so has ever been presented.

“Well, if the Evila have a reason to not fight and there is some merit that outweighs the demerit of losing the bridge then they might do so. There probably isn’t though.”

Rarashik says so, but they did not know that there is someone in the Evila who has a reason to not fight.

“Is that so... So the war can’t be stopped after all...”

Arnold mutters and Muir has a downcast look.

“If only there was some miraculous irregularity happening... But, the world isn’t such an easy place.”

Listening to Rarashik’s philosophical words, Arnold and Muir get more depressed, but Hihiro was thinking of something different.

“The Evila, there is definitely a reason why they haven’t attacked despite being so powerful. If that reason was... No, I wonder...”

If the reason was related to avoiding the war, it doesn’t necessarily mean that anything may happen in this war. Though this was nothing more than Hihiro’s conjecture, the answer would be known soon.

Whether if it will become a full-scale war or not... The answer would be known soon.

“We’re releasing it! Aquinas!”

Eveam, who was building the magic array, continues to pour in magic from her pitiful left arm.

“Okay.”

Followed by Aquinas, who was pouring in an equal amount of magic. The black mass that appeared grew in size, filling the gap between the two magic arrays.

“Let’s go, Aquinas!”

Her yell acting as the trigger, the black mass wrapped around the magic arrays as if to cover them.

“Disappear into darkness! Cosmic End !”

RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE!

The black mass that was fired off with tremendous speed headed towards the bridge.

It was in an instant. Yes, it happened in an instant.

The monsters that were supposed to be on top of the bridge were sucked into the black mass...

The black mass touched the bridge and instantly wrapped around all 30km of it.

And then a few seconds later, the giant Gedult Bridge disappeared without a trace. It was as if a bridge never existed there in the first place...

The weather suddenly cleared up. There were almost no casualties on both sides. Only the path that connected them had disappeared. Only that.

“Uh...”

The wings on Eveam’s back disappeared and she fell towards the sea. However, Aquinas appeared and caught her.

“I... I may have used up too much blood...”

“...”

Her face was pale, but she felt happy that she was able to follow through with what she wanted to do. Aquinas carried her and started leaving from where they were. When suddenly!

Whooooooooooooooooosh!

“!?”

Something was fired towards them from the Gabranth. Aquinas instantly dodged it. It looked like a spear, but it was surprising because it was a spear.

(If there is someone who could throw a spear all the way here, it would be...) Thinking that, Aquinas focuses her eyes towards the Gabranth. Where she is right now is approximately 15km from the Gabranth forces. Throwing a spear accurately from that distance is no easy feat.

There was also a fair amount of power behind it. Aquinas determined that if the spear had hit its target, she would have taken considerable damage. There was only one person Aquinas knew who was capable

of such an attack.

“...The Beast King, huh.”

“Shit! She dodged it!”

Leowald spat out those words while his face contorted in anger. Even for him the distance was too far and he was unable to hit his target.

“How dare you... How dare you! Evilaaaaaa!”

Leowald screamed into the sky. It couldn't be helped. They assembled their forces in order to fight a war today. They formulated a plan, determined that they could wipe out the Evila this time and decided to go to war.

Despite that, their enemies left the scene before the fighting even began. They didn't even think that such a thing could have happened.

“If it's like this, one might think they were being sincere with their peace treaty.”

Lenion replies to Leglos's muttering.

"Even though I thought it must've been a trap or something. Are they really seeking peace? There's no way!"

It wasn't just to the Humas. The Evila had also sent a peace treaty to the Gabranth. Of course it was not taken seriously until now, but with what happened today they were able to determine some of the intentions behind the treaty.

“You shiiiiits! Fiiiiight! You Evila traaaaaash!”

Everyone watched Leowald scream with resentment, as if he had lost himself.

“Anyhow, we need to talk about what we will do from now on. We have to stop Father, Lenion.”

“Tsk, what a pain in the ass.”

The two went to stop their father who was taking out his anger on the ground and nearby rocks. After watching those two, Yuhito looked toward Eveam and Aquinas, who disappeared into the sky, with a smile on his face.

(Nyohohohoho! To think it would end like this. It seems like I need to hurry in completing 'that'. Nyohohohoho!)

Chapter 42: Another Conference in the Demon Country

“What exactly are you trying to do?!”

Slamming the desk in front of him, Marione, the Second Rank of the Cruel Brigade, revealed his foul mood.

As the Gedult Bridge was destroyed by Eveam and Aquinas, a Demon Conference was suddenly initiated in order to ascertain the meaning behind such actions. Being the Demon Lord, Eveam recognized the need to explain their motive and so immediately permitted the meeting.

“Your Majesty...you will give us a satisfactory explanation, yes?”

Seeing Marione’s face turn scarlet with rage, the brigade’s Fifth Rank Shublars spoke as she gave a bewitching smile.

“Chotto chotto~, don’t get too heated, alright? I’m sure that her majesty will definitely explain it to us.”

Upon hearing those words, Marione redirected his scowl towards Shublars. However, he realized that if he kept talking, the conference would not be able to progress. Thus, Marione reluctantly controlled himself. Sitting down in his seat, he blasted Aquinas who was sitting next to him with a murderous glare. However, Aquinas, who had her eyes closed, did not react to it.

After confirming that silence had completely enveloped the atmosphere, Eveam began to speak.

“Firstly, I must apologize to everyone for any misgivings. Especially to Marione, I apologize for not informing you of our actions.”

The reason for their deception was obvious. Anyone could figure out the reason. If Marione knew of their plans, he would undoubtedly object. Therefore, time needed to be spent in order to convince him of their plans. In the worst case scenario, they would not be able to execute their plan in time.

If the knowledge of an outrageous plan to destroy the bridge was spread in advance, even the soldiers would become confused. Also, should the Gabranth catch wind of their plan, they might take measures to prevent it.

It was precisely because of this that Eveam only consulted her aid, Kiria, and Aquinas about her plan.

“But don’t you think you overdid it? Your Majesty’s ideas were already established in the last meeting. By destroying the bridge, you managed to delay the war while preventing any harm that would befall the Evila.”

Following the Sixth Rank Greyald’s statement, Shublars tacked on her own thoughts.

“Speaking of which, doesn’t destroying that bridge contradict Her Majesty’s philosophy?”

“Yeah. It’s exactly as Shublars-neesan said. That bridge was the only thing that tied our two races together. Doesn’t destroying that mean Your Majesty has given up on the possibility of bringing the two races together?”

What Eveam desired was a world where everyone would lay down their arms and come together and support each other. She didn’t want to just make peace between continents, but she wanted every individual to live as equals under the same sky.

In a world where the various races loathed each other, the bridge was the last remaining symbol that acted as a connecting thread between the two countries. As long as that bridge existed, there was still hope that the countries could eventually be able to treat each other as if they were friendly neighbors.

However, Eveam had decided to sever that very thread. It was all well and good that the war could be avoided, however, to the Gabranth that had spent so much effort cultivating the stage of war, it would feel as if their pride had been trampled on. Obviously, the chance for successful reconciliation between the two races had decreased dramatically.

In fact, the Gabranth would probably never forgive the Evila from fleeing the so-called stage of combat.

“‘Our preparations have been wasted’...this is probably what those Gabranth are thinking. Haa~”

Shublars’ callous words pierced Eveam’s heart. It was without question that Eveam did not choose this method willingly. However, in order to prevent the outbreak of war, she couldn’t think of any other way.

“Even we Evila had made preparations, you know! And yet, all that work was wasted by Her Majesty in one fell swoop!”

Marione once again unleashed his pent-up complaints.

“...I have no words to refute your distress. However, all I want is to protect the Evila!”

“Protect them!? No matter what kind of power those Gabranth have, us Evila will undoubtedly be victorious!”

“That’s not what I mean.”

“...Ha—?”

“If we did go to war, we may indeed come out as the victors just as Marione says. We Evila have always prided ourselves with our peerless strength.”

“Then why!?”

“Even with our strength...a lot of blood will still be shed, will it not?”

“Mu...what naïve things are you spouting! We’re talking about a war, you know! It’s an obvious thing that blood will spill!”

“That’s what I don’t want!”

Eveam harshly raised her voice in denial. It was at that precise moment that the scene fell silent.

“Not only will there be wounded, piles of corpses will come from both sides. We won’t be able to come out of this battle unscathed!”

“Y-Yes, while that certainly is the case, all that matters is our victory, right?! Everyone wishes to place their lives on the line and fight to the death for the sake of this continent!”

“Risking your lives over a war riddled with misunderstandings is completely ridiculous!”

“...”

Eveam clearly had no intention of fighting. However, the other races wished to put an end to Evila’s Demon Lord as they were under the misunderstanding that the Demon Lord wanted to eradicate them.

“The era of the late king has already passed. We are entrusted with the task of creating our own future. Why do the other races not understand? There is no worth in ruling over a world where everything has been laid to waste. Parents; siblings; friends; lovers...why can’t we just live peacefully in this world that already has such wonderful things?”

“Such ignorance! Your Majesty, you’re completely ignorant about this continent’s current state of affairs! I understand that the one who sparked the flame of this feud between the other races was none other than the late king! However, that flame has already transformed into a war. In order to protect the Evila, no, to protect our families, we have no choice but to take up arms and fight!”

“If we started the fire, then there must be a way we can put it out!”

“And I’m saying the only way to erase that flame is with force! This flame is not so weak as to be put out by those thoughtless words that Your Majesty keeps spouting! If it was, then those guys would have thought the same and come over here to start a conference! Since they didn’t, it can only mean they have turned to battle! Piling up accumulated hatred, the chain of vengeance cannot be severed so easily!”

As the two were arguing, Aquinas was the only one who attempted to enter the conversation.

“Knock it off, both of you.”

“Aquinas...”

“Who are you to say anything!? You’re in the same position as Her Majesty!”

“Don’t say any more than that.”

“Wha...?”

Aquinas directed a sharp glare towards Marione, overwhelming him.

“If you say any more, it will be regarded as an insult.”

“Ku...”

Certainly, no matter how hot-headed Marione was, determining that the actions of Eveam was foolish

would certainly be regarded as slander towards royalty. Even Aquinas was of a higher position than him. She would certainly not forgive anymore of Marione's ranting.

"She's right, you know~~ Why don't you go cool your head off for just a little bit, huh Marione?"

Accepting Shublars soothing words, Marione exhaled as he decided to restrain himself.

"Well, I think both her majesty's sentiments and Marione's ideals have their own merits, you know~. However, the bridge is already gone and, on top of that, time is running out. With that said, instead of throwing about complaints about things that have already happened, wouldn't it be more constructive to start thinking about what's gonna happen from now or something?"

Eveam nor Marione were able to refute her reasoning.

"Well then, Your Majesty? You've obviously thought about what to do now, right?"

"Of course. It is inevitable that the Gabranth will come up with some other method to try and attack us again. The time we have before then is valuable."

"Yeah~"

"Within this time, we have to make the Gabranth think that it is impossible to attack us."

Indeed, if there was a way to deter the Gabranth from attacking, there will no longer be any offensives launched against the Evila. However, as she made her proposal, everyone in the room scowled at Eveam in doubt.

"Does such a method exist?"

Eveam quietly shut her eyes as she opened her mouth to speak.

"We Evila will form an alliance with the Humas."

At that moment, the atmosphere in the room immediately froze. Everyone in the room doubted their own ears. They couldn't believe that in such a situation such words would come from her mouth.

"W-What do you think you're saying your majesty?"

Marione once again failed to restrain himself as he spoke up.

"I will repeat myself as many times as necessary. The Evila are going to form an alliance with the Humas."

"Inconceivable! What do you think you're saying!? In the span of this meeting, you've said many incomprehensible things, but an alliance with the Humas!? Stop playing around!"

"I'm completely serious!"

"W...wha..."

"In light of this war, the Humas who were bystanders should have, at the very least, be willing to become the Evilas' allies."

“...What are you trying to say?”

“The letter.”

“Letter? Aa, you mean that peace treaty that was sent so many times, yet never received a reply?”

Although Marione’s words contained some sarcasm, Eveam proceeded to explain without concern.

“That’s the one. Due to the events of the previous war, its credibility had considerably wavered. Probably due to the fact that they were betrayed after they believed in it.”

The Humas have experienced being caught in a trap due to the letter so they naturally doubted it. Of course, this happened in the era of the previous king.

“However, thanks to our actions, I believe that our intentions of not desiring conflict has been conveyed to them. At the very least, they will have some doubts concerning our motives.”

Certainly, the Humas’ king Rudolph had devoted his time on the sidelines to properly evaluate the integrity of the peace treaty.

“In which case, depending on the circumstances, we should be able to bring about a conference with them.”

“A conference...you say?”

“Aa, of course once the conference has been approved, I plan on traveling to the human world.”

“Impossible! If you accept such a thing, this time it’ll be us who would be deceived!”

“Aa, I am aware that we might be betrayed.”

“T-Then—!?”

“However, if I don’t take the risk, we won’t ever be able to regain their trust.”

“Uu...”

Seeing Eveam’s somber eyes, Marione finally understood that Eveam was completely serious.

“Of course, I will pay the utmost heed. I will take care to investigate the inner workings of the human world as I make my way to the conference.”

“B-But even so—!”

Yes, if they were to endeavor to hold a conference, they must in return bear some level of risk. The number of escorts she could bring would most likely be limited. It was also possible that she would be surrounded and ambushed by all of the Humas’ forces. After all, it was their territory.

Honestly, sending their lord to such a dangerous place would be insane.

“Y-You realize that you’re the Demon Lord, right?”

In an attempt to cast away their dismay, Eveam answered with a small smile.

“Yes, I am. That’s why I won’t waver in the face of death.”

“...”

Accepting those words, all eyes silently turned to her.

“I don’t care how dangerous the place is. I’ll drag myself through the mud. I’ll even crawl on my hands and knees. If it’s for the sake of the Evila, I’ll gladly trek through death valley.”

Marione always thought that Eveam was a naïve girl that had the intelligence of a little girl. An idiot who refused to look at the reality before her eyes, whose head was only full of ideals.

(An idiot can only advance like an idiot, I guess...)

Eveam’s eyes were devoid of any hesitation. She put into words her serious and unshakable conviction. Her way of thinking was still immature. Her declaration was unlike a King issuing an order. Being immediately chosen as the successor to the late king that died suddenly, one could only say that she was a naïve girl.

“...I’m sorry, but I cannot give you my approval. You are treating your own life too lightly.”

“I know. However, I must go through with this. Because I believe I can change the future. If I don’t do this, I’m certain that I’ll deeply regret it.”

She would never allow a senseless war like this to happen again. She had already rested long enough.

“In the end, it all depends on the Humas, though.”

“Aa, well, until we get the Humas’ approval, please voice anything you’re unsure of. Unless we’re clear about this plan, the Peace Treaty Conference won’t be very useful.”

“I see~ Even if we form a truce with the Humas, they won’t necessarily intervene in a war between the Gabranth and Evila, right~?”

Eveam returned a nod towards Shublars’ words.

“But even so, I doubt the Gabranth will just remain silent without doing anything. They might do something unexpected, you know? And also, those fellows may know other ways of getting to the Demon World...”

What Greyald said also had merit. Even if they earned some time, it would be unheard of for the Gabranth to sit back and do nothing. Basically, they had a time limit.

“It is as Greyald said. Kiria, please prepare the letter post haste. I beg of you.”

“As you wish.”

Kiria, who had been silently standing besides Eveam throughout the entire meeting, respectfully lowered her head.

“This Conference is done for today. If the situation shifts, then I will immediately convene another conference. Dismissed.”

In response to her words, the Cruel Brigade departed from the room. The ones who remained were once again Aquinas and the Fourth Rank Ornoth.

“There’s something I want to discuss with you, Aquinas.”

Ornoth wanted to hear his friend Aquinas’ thoughts about something other than the destruction of the bridge.

“I feel bad for you. It seems like some of Marione’s subordinates have been snooping around in your affairs.”

“True. Marione-dono seems to have little faith in me.”

“Well, if it gets to be too much of a pain for you, I’ll try and do something about it.”

“No, please spare me from that. If you feel like doing something, then please do it discreetly.”

Ornoth spoke as he chuckled to himself.

“In any case, what do you think of Her Majesty’s decision?”

“The alliance?”

“Yeah. Don’t you think it’s a bit reckless?”

“Even if it’s reckless, it’s not impossible...apparently.”

“...I see.”

For a moment, Ornoth’s face showed a blank expression. It was true that if you read the meaning of the words, being reckless means that the possibility of success exists.

“But still, an alliance, huh... The Gabranth will surely not remain silent.”

“Aa.”

“And even so, didn’t the Humas want to defeat us Evila so badly that they summoned heroes?”

“Aa.”

“Aquinas, my friend, do you think this plan will succeed?”

“...I can’t say. However—”

“However?”

“Our duty is to protect the Demon Lord. Even if...we have to eradicate everything else.”

“...I genuinely hope that doesn’t happen. Even I don’t want to recklessly deprive people of life.”

As Aquinas stood up and started to move, he suddenly paused.

“Our Majesty makes a lot of mistakes. However, she is still our Lord. We cannot allow her to be killed.”

“Aa.”

Thus, the two departed from the conference room.

Chapter 43: Rarashik's Ability

“That aside, what did you really want to talk to me about?”

Rarashik said as she tilted her head and looked at the three of them while she settled into a chair.

“You guys came here to hear about the war. However, that’s not all you’re here for, right?”

“Aa. Actually, I have favor to ask.”

“Favor? What is it?”

“It’s about this girl here...”

Arnold placed his hand on top of Muir’s head.

“Her name is Muir, right? What’s on your mind?”

“I want you to be her mentor.”

“Eh—?”

Muir exclaimed in surprise. This was not because she was opposed to the idea, but because she had never even dreamed that she would be taught by Arnold’s master.

“Nah, it looks like a pain.”

Muir’s shoulders drooped the moment Rarashik rejected it.

“How could you, Shishou!? I’m begging you! We struggled so much to get you the honey. The honey that you love. The honey to make your alcohol...”

“Well. This and that are completely unrelated. First of all, you ignored my orders and left. Then, you suddenly come back with a child in tow. And now, you want me to take care of that child!? You’ve gotta be kidding me!?”

Arnold was unable to refute her arguments. Everything she said was undeniably true. Nonetheless, with her ability and guidance, it was clear that Muir would grow up to be strong under her care.

“I was young and adventurous then... I mostly wanted to test my strength.”

“That’s what I expected you to say. You’re still a greenhorn, after all.”

“E-Even if I look like this, I’ve become a bit stronger, you know! Go ahead and see for yourself!”

“Hou~?”

Rarashik's eyes lit up instantly. Feeling an uncomfortable atmosphere coming from her, Arnold started panicking.

"I'll accept under one condition."

"C-Condition...you say?"

"Aa. Spar with me. If you can touch me during the spar, even if it's just a graze, then I'll take up your request."

"Just...a graze?"

"Aa, of course, it goes without saying that I'll be given a handicap."

Hearing that, Arnold thought that if he tried his best, he believed that he could honestly touch her. However, his hopes were betrayed when Rarashik continued her explanation.

"However, the one who'll be participating will only be Muir."

"...Pardon?"

"You got it? She gets 3 days. I'll give the jou-chan²⁴ the right to spar against me for 3 days. I don't care about the method. If her fingertips can even graze me, she will be declared the victor."

"Y-Yes!"

At the moment, they were currently in a room within the basement. A basement where monsters and creatures of all kinds were brought in for experimentation. It clearly had more than enough space and durability to withstand a simple spar.

(The space closely resembles that of a small gym, huh... To top it all off, it's a basement. To be able to make something like this, that Chibi-usagi really has a lot of free time on her hands...)

Hiiro folded his arms as he examined the room in admiration. He determined that it must have taken a very long time to build something like this.

"Uu, do you think Muir's gonna be okay...?"

It seemed that Arnold was the most worried about the situation. When Rarashik presented her condition, Arnold was puzzled and unsure what to do. The person who responded immediately to the challenge, however, was Muir.

It went without saying that Muir's response was 'Please let me do it!' Obviously, Arnold was surprised, but Rarashik also seemed to be taken aback. Seeing the weak and frail Muir displaying such bold determination would surprise anybody.

Rarashik, however, simply smirked at her response as she motioned everyone to follow her.

Rarashik's strength was overwhelmingly clear. Even with a handicap, it seemed unfathomable that Muir, who just became a novice fighter, to be able to even scratch an SSS-ranker.

Imagining a tattered Muir breaking down and bawling her eyes out, Arnold could not help but be concerned.

In contrast to Arnold, Hihiro thought that such a turn of events was quite interesting. Even though he had just been messed around with by Rarashik, he was now able to slowly and carefully observe her movements. Objectively speaking, this would be a great opportunity to observe her abilities and see just what she was truly capable of.

“Well, jou-chan. In regards to the handicap, I will be deprived of any means of attacking. This means that I won’t be using my hands and my Binding skill will be restricted. Feel free to attack me all you want.”

With this kind of a handicap, Arnold or Hihiro might have been able to do something. However, for Muir, the gap in levels was despairingly large. And even without taking the levels into consideration, the difference in their combat experience would be like measuring the distance between the earth and the sky.

“Muir...”

“Well, all we can do is to just see how this plays out.”

As the two were watching, the practice known as sparring had begun between Muir and Rarashik.

“Eei!”

Muir straightforwardly rushed toward Rarashik. However, as expected, she had missed. The moment Muir drew close enough to strike, Rarashik immediately vanished. Reappearing behind her without anyone noticing, she laughed.

“Hahaha, jou-chan, you’re gonna make me sweat at least a little bit, right?”

Those words seemed to flip a switch within Muir. She also had the blood of the Gabranth running through her veins. She was not one who would simply accept being made fun of on the battlefield.

“I’ll definitely get you!”

However, no matter how much Muir dived toward Rarashik, it seemed pointless. Rarashik seemed to purposely wait until Muir drew close, waiting until the point where she would be able to almost touch her. Immediately following that, before that instance would classify as a ‘touch’, Rarashik would vanish and reappear in a completely different place.

This spectacle continued itself over and over. Muir rushed in a countless number of times, but each time Rarashik would do the same thing as if she was just playing with her. Eventually, Muir’s shoulders drooped.

“*Hah, hah, hah...*”

“What, you done already?”

Muir continued intently, as if she was trying to grab onto a cloud. Muir was sweating profusely, her entire body drenched in sweat. The temperature of the basement may have partly contributed to her unfortunate

state.

“Poor Muir...”

Arnold stared anxiously.

(As expected of the Chibi-usagi. Even while moving around to such an extent, she’s not even breaking a sweat. On the contrary, her smile has never faltered even once.)

The fact that Rarashik was enjoying herself so thoroughly that she was grinning wholeheartedly meant that she had a substantial margin for error. Being unable to even wipe that smile off of her face, it seemed that Muir’s chances of winning was nonexistent.

(Hn? Actually, this is great timing. Now would be the perfect opportunity to investigate her stats...)

Thinking this, Hiiro wrote the word `Pry` and activated it. He didn’t have a chance to try it before, however, now he was free to do so.

Thus, Hiiro opened Rarashik’s `Status` window. The moment it appeared, he was startled by what he saw.

RARASHIK FAN’NARU		Lv. 123	
HP:	7065/7065	ATK:	1211
MP:	696/696	DEF:	1178
		AGL:	1119
EXP:	1884421	HIT:	989
NEXT:	74980	INT:	800
Magic Attribute Ice			
Magic Ice Fang, Assault of the Absolute Ice Beast, Roar of the Ice Beast, Absolute-Zero, Ice Prison, Final Fang ²⁵			
Titles Companion of Ice, Little Girl, Binge Drinker, Blade of the Wild, Researcher, Demon Slayer, A Weirdo Born from a Weirdo, The Creator of the Binding Technique, Gabranth Fighter, One Who Can Influence Phenomena, A Determined Person ²⁶			

Hiiro was dumbfounded. The level difference was clearly overwhelming. Lining up all of the numbers of her stats, it was easy to see that she had optimized her stats to be fairly balanced.

(Her stats exceed mine by over 100, huh... So these are the stats of an SSS-ranker... It certainly is one heck of a surprise.)

He wasn’t expecting her level to be that high. However, looking at those numbers, Hiiro took comfort in the fact that he was overwhelmed by her earlier.

(However...I kind of expected her to have it, the title of ‘Little Girl’...)

Although he was aware that Rarashik hated being called that, no matter how he looked at her, the title of

‘Little Girl’ was the one that seemed the most fitting.

(But looking at these numbers, isn’t this a bit too harsh for the chibi...)

Contemplating such thoughts in his mind, Hihiro continued to watch the two sparring. With this difference of ability, unless something unexpected occurred, Muir had no chance of winning.

Muir herself had started to take notice of the lack of progress. Needless to say, it was taking its toll on her spirit.

(S-She’s fast...compared to Oji-san or Hihiro, she’s faster...)

Muir could somehow follow her movements, however, her body was unable to react quickly enough. Even though she had suddenly leveled up substantially, she felt that she was unable to grasp to what extent her physical abilities had grown.

(She’ll keep avoiding me if I just rush in blindly... If I could just use the Binding skill from that time...)

After viewing the images from Hihiro’s Projection , she was able to see what had occurred at that time. She saw herself using that skill. She was sure that she would be able to do something if she could freely use that skill. However, after looking at the Projection of herself using the ability, she still didn’t believe that she was that the one that triggered the skill. This prevented her from activating that ability.

(Oji-san told me about it before. That Binding is actually the power of belief...however, do I really have that kind of power inside of me?)

She tried to use the Binding skill several times before, yet each time was devoid of any response. In the first place, since Muir had not been told how in any great detail how to invoke the skill, she had absolutely no idea how to apply it, let alone use it.

“C’mon, hurry up and catch me. Or what, are you giving up?”

At those words, Muir forced willpower into her gaze.

“I-I won’t give up!”

Placing strength into her legs once more, she rushed towards Rarashik.

“That’s the way! Come at me! If you don’t even reach out your hands, you’ll never be able to grasp at what you’re trying to catch!”

“Taaaaaaa~”

Chapter 44: Muir's Test Complete!

Two days had passed. The end of the last day was gone before the time limit drew closer. During this time, a chance to catch Rarashik had not yet presented itself to Muir.

Due to the fatigue caused by her constant attempts, Muir was barely able to stand. Her condition was in tatters. Throughout the two days, she had wasted a considerable amount of time due to losing consciousness several times.

As expected, without eating, drinking or resting, continuing a constant battle for three days was impossible. Therefore, breaks were provided throughout the sparring (although they were fairly short). However, the benefits of having those breaks had yet to present themselves.

Even during those three days, the smile on Rarashik's face never failed to disappear.

"Nn~, this is looking bad, huh."

Scratching her head, Rarashik gazed at Muir who was lying stretched out on the ground, exhausted. It would not be strange for Muir, who had been relentlessly continuing her assault for the last few days, to be devoid of energy.

"It's good to see that you're stubborn, but if you're only at this level then you lack the power to become my disciple."

"Uu...."

Muir desperately put all the strength she had into pushing herself up from the ground. Arnold closed his eyes, unable to stand looking at the spectacle any longer. Seeing his aversion, Hihiro opened his mouth.

"That's surprising. I expected you to have told them to stop by now, but?"

"As if I could stop them! That girl...to have such a desperate look on her face, there's no parent in the world that would stop them now."

"Fun."

"All I'm saying is that I believe that Muir can win."

Arnold held up both hands as if he were praying. Hihiro presumed that, considering Arnold's personality, he would have stopped the spar. However, what Hihiro failed to realize was that Arnold was always thinking about what was best for Muir.

As it was by her own will that Muir made this decision to struggle against Rarashik, Arnold had to accept it. If Arnold stopped them, it would be as if he was denying Muir's will. If he were to do such a thing, he would be disqualified from being her parent.

(Well, those two can think whatever they want. Regardless, things will undeniably get harsher from here on out.)

Throughout this two day period, there was barely any progress. Even if Muir's movements had gotten better, it seemed insignificant when compared to Rarashik.

Whether Muir passed or failed this trial, Hiiro didn't give a damn. This was simply because Hiiro was completely unrelated to this matter. However, seeing the tattered body of a girl who was putting forth earnest effort, Hiiro thought that it was probably natural to hold the other side in contempt.

Such a girl's opponent was displaying a conniving smile, as if the girl were dancing in the palm of her hands. Naturally, it did not leave a very pleasant feeling. Hiiro couldn't help but feel that he wanted to erase Rarashik's smirk with bewilderment.

Which was why Hiiro decided to open his mouth.

“Oi, Chibi.”

Everyone started at Hiiro who was the source of the sudden noise. Even Muir, who was battered and fatigued, reacted to Hiiro's voice.

“If you want to become stronger, then stop being so meticulous.”

“.....?”

“Remember what happened before. Even if it's vague, just do what you felt at that time.”

“A-At that time...?”

Hiiro folded his arms as he closed his eyes. That was the sign which meant he had nothing left to say.

“Hiiro...you...”

Arnold's eyes widened as he stared at Hiiro. It was unbelievable that Hiiro had given someone advice. For better or for worse, Hiiro only cared about himself, and yet he gave advice to Muir. Somehow, Arnold felt happiness spread somewhere inside of him.

“That's right, Muir! Even if you have no faith in your own strength, place your faith in me who believes in your strength!”

“O-Oji-san...”

“Listen up! You'll definitely get stronger! I guarantee it!”

Arnold's words seemed to pierce Muir's chest. Following this, Muir felt as if Hiiro's words had wrapped around her entire body.

“Gee~z, they're a noisy bunch. If you think those words will make her stronger, then...”

Suddenly, Rarashik's long rabbit ears tensed. She looked at Muir who was staggering to her feet.

“Hiiro-san, Oji-san....thank you.”

A strong light dwelled within Muir's once uncertain eyes.

“...Fu~n, I see...”

Rarashik wore a meaningful smile. Whether her eyes were filled with expectation or amusement at a weakling's struggle was uncertain.

Muir closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

(Right now, I'm not sure if I really have strength. I don't know if I can become stronger. However, Oji-san believes in me. Such a person has placed his faith in me!)

She clenched her hands tightly.

(I won't hesitate any more! I just need to remember what happened in that moment!)

Muir recalled the moment when she was captured by the Clay Viper, when she had awakened to her power. It was fuzzy, however, at that time she herself had desperately wanted to escape. The thoughts of wanting to obtain power had definitely passed through her mind.

“That's right! I'll be able to somehow do something by myself!”

In that instant...

pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi²⁷

A vaguely familiar sight had been achieved for the second time. Muir's body shone brightly, giving birth to a tremendous amount of electrical discharge. The sparks ferociously scattered in all directions, as if they were beasts hunting for prey.

“Wha—?!”

As expected, this outcome was outside of even Rarashik's expectations. Her eyes widened as her pupil seemed to slightly convulse in bewilderment.

However, Rarashik wasn't the only target. Anything other than Muir had been determined as prey for the lightning to lash out at.

“W-Whoa—!”

Arnold desperately dodged. A bolt of lightning scorched the ground black. It was a chilling sight. If one was directly shocked, it was more than possible that they wouldn't walk away unscathed.

Following that, another bolt of lightning extended itself towards Hihiro.

“Unbelievable. I know I said not to think too much, but getting bystanders involved is a bit much, you know.”

Although Hihiro tried to evade to the side, another bolt had already made its way there as it flashed towards him. No, it was more like the discharge had practically surrounded him. At this rate, he would

fall prey to the bolts of lightning.

Clicking his tongue, Hiiro was forced to write the word Protect in order to defend himself. A pale wall of magic wrapped around Hiiro's body, deflecting the incoming lightning.

“That’s... —tch!?”

Taking in the situation, Rarashik narrowed her eyes. However, lightning was steadily approaching her.

“This isn’t the time to be looking away.”

Lightly clicking her tongue, Rarashik avoided the lightning with nimble movements. As she evaded, she contemplated.

(So it’s about this level of power that was released. I’m guessing that the jou-chan has lost consciousness...wha—!?)

The torrent of energy was clearly in a rampant, uncontrolled state. Muir, who had produced such a discharge, seemed to have been devoid of consciousness. At least, that was what Rarashik had thought. And yet, Muir was staring directly at her.

Of course, Muir’s face contorted in pain. Yet the light in her eyes had not faded, plainly capturing the image of Rarashik within them.

(No way! She’s still conscious!?)

Following this, Muir took off her damaged cap, revealing the appearance of her silvery white hair and splendid kemonomimi²⁸.

(As I thought, isn’t it exactly like that Hiiro or something boya...)

She remembered that Hiiro stated they were only of the same race. However, what happened in the next instant shocked Rarashik.

Suddenly, Muir’s silver-grey ears started to glow with a silver light, transforming from ears that would be considered normal to a shape that resembled wings. The size of the ears had also doubled when compared to the original.

(That’s the Silver Feather-eared ! That hair and those ears!? To think that there was a survivor of that clan!)

However, even that thought was fleeting as while she was running and jumping, a bolt of lightning, similar to earlier, had flared up in front of her. Rarashik momentarily stopped her legs as if she were applying a brake in order to avoid being hit. However, it was precisely this moment that Muir was aiming for.

(Now! This is the only chance I’ll get! Put all my remaining strength in my legs!)

Even though Muir was still unable to freely control her power, light gathered at the base of her feet. In that moment, her ears fluttered as if they were wings.

Byun²⁹

From her current position, as if she were a spring, she kicked at the ground.

“S-So fast!?”

Seeing Muir rush towards her with tremendous momentum, Rarashik instinctively placed her right hand on Muir's back as she jumped over her, avoiding Muir's body blow.

However, it was highly likely that Muir would slam into a wall with such momentum.

“MUIR!!!”

Arnold yelled as he immediately brought himself between Muir and the wall.

Slaaaaaaaaaam

Arnold caught Muir with his own body, the sound of his body colliding with the wall ringing out. Arnold's body served as a cushion, resulting in Muir's body being unharmed. However...

pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachi pachiiiiiiiiii

“Ma-mamamamamatatatatatagagagagagagaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.”³⁰

Once again, like the previous time, it was Arnold who had suffered from the attack.

After receiving the damage, light gradually faded from Muir's body. It seemed that the sparks had subsided. Muir's ears also returned to their normal state.

“O-Oji-san! I-I’m sorry!”

Within Arnold's arms, Muir looked up and immediately apologized.

“Aha...hahahah...I’m alright, I’m fine...”

As his body was convulsing, it was clear that he was not okay at all. However, he simply smiled as he tried to reassure Muir.

“I-I’m so glad...”

Expressing her genuine relief, she collapsed into Arnold's chest in exhaustion.

“Muir!”

Arnold hastily supported her in his arms. However, after hearing her silent breathing, Arnold's countenance changed to one of relief. He gently placed his hand on her head.

“You really tried hard, Muir.”

Arnold affectionately caressed her head. The one being petted showed relaxed cheeks with a comforted expression.

Looking at the two, Rarashik intuitively displayed a wry smile.

“I don’t believe it. To think that I lost the game in just three days...”

Rarashik muttered as she stared at her right hand. Indeed, one of her handicaps was the restriction of both hands. The fact that she use her right hand meant that it was her complete loss.

“With this, she’s now your disciple, huh Chibi-usagi?”

“Guess so. Honestly, even though I said it looked like a pain, all I wanted to do was measure her power and potential.”

“Oi, does that mean that even if you guys didn’t have this little spar, you would have made her your disciple anyway?”

“Ah? More or less. Arnold’s an idiot but even so, wasn’t he being a bit too foolish? I didn’t think he’d bring along someone who lacked both the talent or the experience on a dangerous journey. Therefore, I knew that something was weird about that girl but...to think that she was a Ginryuu ³¹.”

(Ginyruu? Is that Muir’s clan? Ryuu? Ryu as in Dragon? So basically, she’s a silver dragon? I don’t recall it being in the reference book, but...)

Even though Hihiro expressed interest since a word outside his realm of knowledge appeared, there was something else bothering him that he needed to take care of.

“Oi, Chibi-usagi. Don’t tell anyone about my power, alright?”

“Nn? Power? What’re you talking about?”

“Don’t play dumb. When I used my skill, I noticed you looking my way.”

“Ho~, got caught, huh.”

“I don’t care. Just don’t tell anyone else.”

“Well, from what I saw it looked like a unique magic. I guess you’ve got your reasons.”

“...Keep it quiet, alright?”

“Now, what should I do~?”

“Y-You fuckin’!”

(But they’re full of peculiar things, this bunch. I have to keep the fact that jou-chan being a Ginryuu in check. The thing that’s really mysterious is this boya. Even though he’s a Gabranth, he can use magic? Not to mention it’s unique. Furthermore, he’s of the same race as the jou-chan, a Ginryuu ...)

If Rarashik were to discover the answers to her questions, riddle by riddle, Hihiro seriously considered using the word Forget to erase her memory. As he was contemplating this, Arnold walked towards them.

“S-Shishou, t-the test...?”

“Nn, Ah? Aa, she passed. Make sure to tell the jou-chan when she wakes up. We need to make sure we take extra care of the roots.”

“Y-Yes!”

Arnold genuinely made a face of joy.

“Well, let’s head back for the time being. We have a lot to talk about regarding what’s gonna happen from now on.”

pi~pi~pi~pi~pi~!

Just when they were about to leave, a series of ringing tones echoed.

“S-Shishou, what is this?”

“.....They came back? What in the?”

Rarashik seemed to have understood what the signal meant. However, Rarashik scowled, seemingly unable to believe what had been conveyed to her.

“S-Shishou?”

“For now, we’re heading back.”

In response to Rarashik’s suddenly serious expression, Hiiro and Arnold could only tilt their heads in confusion. However, in order to listen to her explanation, the two followed after her.

Chapter 45: The Gabranth's Origins

Compared to the time when they first met Rarashik, the lab-like room they had returned to had one thing different about it.

“W-What’s the deal with this thing?”

Hiiro, looking at the strange object that was right in front of him, asked with a furrowed brow.

(It’s white and small and looks like a rabbit...isn’t this..?)

“Oo, it’s been a while since I’ve seen Shishou’s Spirit .”

“ Spirit ? You mean this thing?”

Hiiro involuntarily cast a suspicious gaze. No matter how you looked at it, what was in front of him looked exactly like the snow rabbit that children would make on snowy days. As it was bouncing energetically, it seemed impossible not to be surprised.

“More importantly, was that warning real?”

When Rarashik asked the Spirit , it responded in affirmation as it faintly shook its head up and down.

“No way...what in the world...it couldn’t be that the irregular case would actually...?”

Rarashik put a hand on her chin. Arnold acted as the representative of those in the dark as he spoke.

“A-Ano, Shishou? What exactly...?”

“.....”

“A-Ano?”

“.....”

“S-Shishou...?”

No matter what Arnold said, there was no response. Rarashik just remained there, frozen in a thinking posture as if her time had stopped.

Arnold scratched his head as he looked toward Hiiro for a response. However, Hiiro just shrugged his shoulders as he leaned against a wall. Arnold had no choice but to wait for Rarashik to break out of her trance. Therefore, Arnold placed the unconscious Miur on the bed.

After waiting for a short time, the Spirit starting bouncing on top of Rarashik’s head. As if that action stimulated something in her brain, Rarashik finally redirected her gaze towards the others.

“Ah, Shishou?”

“.....Haa~”

Rarashik let a about a big sigh. Not knowing why she displayed such a depressed attitude, Hihiro and his group looked at each other with their heads tilted to the side in confusion.

“Shishou? What in the world just happened?”

When Arnold asked a second time, it looked like they would finally get an explanation. Furthermore, the content of the answer was startling.

“...The army is returning.”

“...Hee~ the army is, huh? I didn’t know that....wait a minute, S-S-S-S-SERIOUSLY!?”

Arnold had replied with great force. However, the answer was so astonishing that his brain skipped, causing his comprehension time to lag.

The King’s army should be in the middle of a war right now. Furthermore, they only started the war three days ago. It was a battle that would determine the fate of two powerful races. There was no way that the war would end in only three days. He had passed off Rarashik’s words as a joke. However, she had a serious expression on her face.

“Seriously. My Spirit thoroughly investigated it.”

Saying so, Rarashik placed her hand on the head of her Spirit

“W-Wait, you say investigated...huh? You mean the war, right?”

“Aa.”

“The war that just started 3 days ago?”

“Probably.”

“Yet, the King’s army is returning just now?”

“Aa.”

“...Even if we lost, isn’t that too fast? No, even if they were victorious, it would be just as unbelievable.”

It was just as Arnold assumed. Even if they lost, they would just gather the Gabranth’s elite and replenish their forces at the border. Numbers are a significant factor in war. They were not a force that could be completely subdued within 3 days.

The same thing could be said for the opponents, the Evila. Behind their front lines was their home territory. Even if the Gabranth had obtained victory, they would wind up having to face the full force of the Evila. Completely invading within three days was impossible.

“??...are you sure the report isn’t false?”

It was understandable for Arnold to think that. However, Rarashik just shook her head.

“No, I asked this child to monitor the outcome of the war. I also ordered him to sound an alarm if the King withdrew from the battlefield.”

While explaining so, Rarashik pointed to a red button installed on the wall. Certainly, a red button was present there.

“Then...it’s really true?”

“That seems to be the case. If you want the details, this child saw it all so if we listen then maybe we can understand what happened.”

“Is the King’s army already in the country?”

“No, they haven’t arrived yet. However, we’re talking about that person so coming back shouldn’t really be...”

As the two of them made a difficult expression as they thought about the current situation, Hihiro, who was listening silently, opened his mouth.

“Oi, more importantly, what’s a Spirit?”

No matter the circumstances, he was really the same, self-paced Hihiro.

“Y-You’re unbelievable! The war just ended, you know, the war has! Instead of saying ‘more importantly’, be surprised a little, huh?”

Anyone would have shared Arnold’s sentiments. However, Hihiro sullenly wrinkled his forehead and looked at him with displeasure.

“I don’t give a damn about the war. Frankly, I’m more interested about the jelly-like³² fellow.”

Hihiro had met the Pheom before. He even directly spoke with the Fairy Queen. It was precisely because of this that Hihiro held considerable interest in the existence known as Spirits. That was why he was interested in the small existence of the Spirit. Furthermore, he felt some sort of affinity with its shape.

“Y-You really are....”

Although Arnold, who was amazed at Hihiro’s nonchalant attitude, stared at him with half-open eyes, Rarashik could only look at him with a blank expression. Then, as her stiff mouth began to relax...

“Nahaha! You’re definitely an interesting person, boya~!”

...she let loose a boisterous voice as she laughed.

“To think that someone would have no interest in this abnormal situation! Better yet, that person is the same as us, a Gabranth! Nahahahahaha.”

‘No, he’s not a Gabranth though...’ was what Arnold almost said without thinking. However, he managed

to somehow stop himself.

Rarashik was laughing so hard that there were tears coming from her eyes. She rubbed her eyes lightly before she raised both hands towards the Spirit on top of her head, holding it between them.

“Alright, I’ll tell you. This child is my Spirit, Yuki-chan.”

‘So it’s not food?’ was what Hihiro thought but didn’t say out loud. In this world, it did look like snow was present. However, there was no way of telling whether their way of playing with snow was the same as in Japan.

“So why’s it here? In fact, can you even make a Spirit work?”

“Nn~ Boya, even though you’re a Gabranth, you don’t know this? That reminds me, you don’t seem to have a nameless bracelet...are you really an adventurer, boya?”

Hihiro was at a loss as to how he should respond. Hihiro was simply not a Gabranth. He only used Word Magic to disguise himself, not to equip himself with a Nameless Bracelet. From what Arnold told him, all Gabranth adventurers wore a bracelet in order to draw on its powers when in combat.

Not possessing the bracelet would mean he would be unable to use the Binding skill, severely limiting his battle potential. Arnold glanced at Hihiro, fidgeting as he also tried to come up with a response.

“Nn? No, a while back you used that strange skill, right? ...Boya, what in the world...”

Hihiro remembered when he was seen using his Word Magic.

“Also, you’re of the same race as the jou-chan, right? You don’t possess a bracelet that she has, you’re able to use a strange skill. On top of that, your knowledge of a Spirit is severely limited...”

Hihiro was gradually becoming cornered. Seeing that, Arnold was unable to further witness the situation. However, Hihiro’s attitude did not change. It was the same, nonchalant demeanor as usual.

“Don’t return a question with a question. If you intend to pry further, you don’t mind if I go, right?”

As Hihiro indifferently made his response, he narrowed his eyes as he met Rarashik’s stare. Thinking that Rarashik had been angered, Arnold shivered. However, the first to break the staring contest was Rarashik.

“Ha~, it can’t be helped. Even though my curious heart is aching, I guess I should leave the questions for later. Besides, since you seem to be insisting that I finish my earlier explanation, I’ll stop asking you questions.”

“Aa, although asking Ossan about it is fine with me.”

“Aaaa~aaaa~, I really wanna know. Hey boya, want to become my experiment subject?”

“I refuse.”

“Uu~, even though such an existence has sparked my curiosity~”

Rarashik hugged her shoulders with both hands, wriggling about with her cheeks flushed. ‘What a disturbing little girl’ is what flashed through Hihiro’s mind.

“Meh, it can’t be helped. No one would agree to anything a stranger asked of them.”

“Putting that aside, are you going to talk or not?”

Putting on a displeased face, Rarashik spoke.

“I got it, I got it. I’ll tell you, alright? Listen up, this Spirit is a different existence compared to those that live naturally in this world.”

“...What do you mean?”

“I’m assuming that you already know that when you awaken the bracelet, you’ll form a contract with a Spirit which will grant the bracelet a name.”

“Aaah.”

“Arnold contracted with the Wind Spirit which made his bracelet a Wind Bracelet, whereas the jou-chan formed a contract with the Thunder Spirit, creating a Thunder Bracelet. However, even if we say we form a contract, the Spirit contracted are not those that are normally present in this world. The Spirits contracted are those that lay dormant within the contractor.”

“Dormant?”

“Yeah. The Ganbranth were originally an existence formed by beasts that became integrated with Spirits.”

“Hou~”

If what she said was true, the Ganbranth could be considered similar to the Pheom that obtained a bigger frame.

“Well, a long time ago we were called Sacred Beasts. We didn’t have a humanoid form like now. As time passed, we slowly transformed to make living easier. It is ironic that we ended up with a humanoid form.”

It was true that being in a human form was better than being in an animal form. In human form, one was able to freely use his or her arms and legs. With it, it would also be easier to create tools and objects as well.

“But at the same time the Grabranth Spirit also became weaker. I don’t know how and why but we seem to have lost the ability to use magic. However, it seemed that our physical abilities and life force increased.”

“I see, that could be the reason why you have beast-like flexibility, mobility and vitality. You were able to manifest the strength of your Spirit.”

“Yes, but it doesn’t change the fact that we are weaker than before. We have the power of the Spirit within ourselves.”

Rarashik pounded her chest when she said so.

“I see, the Nameless Bracelet is the trigger to wake up that spirit right?”

“Oh, you are pretty sharp. But if you don’t have enough strength this bracelet won’t activate though.”

“So it is sort of similar to a booster then?”

Truthfully, it was amazing for someone to be able to make something like this. It was just like her father, it could be considered the discovery of the century.

“Booster huh? That is not completely wrong. It is something that draws out a person’s Spirit and then amplifies it to the limit.”

“So, if we draw upon the Spirit, it means that we draw upon our own power right? Then, wouldn’t it mean that we are making a contract with ourselves?”

“Well, simply put, the Spirit is just another you. A soul that existed in the past, exists even now without an end. We call them Soul Spirits.”

“So you made a contract with this Soul Spirit?”

“Aa, yes, Yuki-chan you see before you is a manifestation of the Soul Spirit. However, only a few Gabranth are able to do something like this.”

Hihiro looked at Arnold with expectations.

“Either way, I am still unable to something something like Spirit Summoning.”

He said with a sulking expression and dropped his shoulders. At that moment, Hihiro remembered the skill Spirit Summoning that he saw on her status screen.

(That is the ability to summon that thing huh.)

Hihiro looked at the cute rabbit Yuki that was doing things in it area of influence

(To think the origin of the Gabranth is a Spirit, this is very interesting.)

It was a good idea to learn about this right now. If a person pretending to be a Gabranth didn’t know something like this, it would raise the suspicion of those around that person. It was good fortune to be hear something like this right now.

“U...”

At that moment, Muir woke and Arnold hastily moved beside her and started talking to her.

Chapter 46: Hiïro's Decision

“Are you alright, Muir?”

“Nn... Eh? E-Eh!?”

Muir didn't understand why she was lying down and became confused. However, she suddenly gasped the situation and remembered how she had just been in a sparring match with Rarashik.

“Um... I...”

“Do you remember now?”

“Y-Yes... U-Um, the game...”

Muir looked toward Rarashik with an uneasy expression on her face. Seeing that, Arnold lightly patted her on her head.

“It was your win.”

“...Eh? R-Really?”

Muir's eyes gradually widened as Arnold's words started to sink in. Arnold nodded his head again.

“Yeah, you did really well.”

Hearing those words, the realization that she had won started welling up inside her and she began to get teary.

“Uu... Uuu... I'm so glaaad.”

She must have truly felt happy. Up until now she had been nothing more than a burden and she was afraid that she would ruin the chance Arnold gave her to be able to train under the best master.

However, she won the game and will be able to learn how to fight from Rarashik. She started to cry in joy thinking about how she could finally be of use to Arnold and Hiïro.

“Hey, Chibi. You might have won the game, but this is only the start.”

Arnold glares at Hiïro, as if to say he didn't need to say that right now. Ignoring Arnold, Rarashik adds onto Hiïro's words.

“Well, I lost so I'll train the jou-chan, but if I ever feel like she doesn't have what it takes I'm going to throw her out.”

“No way!”

“S-Shishou! Please train her until the end!”

“Don’t say something so spoiled! I’ll certainly train her, but I don’t have the free time to waste on someone who can’t do something no matter how much I teach her!”

“Ugh... But...”

“It’s fine, Oji-san.”

“M-Muir?”

“It’s as Hiiro-san and Rarashik-san says. I can’t be spoiled forever.”

“...”

“I decided to become stronger. So I’ll do my best! I’ll do my best to become stronger! And then I want to be able to stand next to Oji-san and Hiiro-san!”

There wasn’t an ounce of hesitation in Muir’s words. In her words, Arnold felt a strong determination. She was that serious.

(...Gin. This girl is exactly like you...)

In this cute girl’s face, Arnold also saw traces of an old acquaintance. Especially the eyes full of determination after one decides what to do. Those eyes were exactly the same as that person’s.

“...Shishou, please take care of her.”

Arnold politely bowed while saying so. Muir staggered while standing up and bowed deeply as well.

“I’ll be in your care!”

Looking at those two, Rarashik giggled.

“My training is strict. Arnold-boya over there can vouch for that. If you’re still willing to train under me, then call me Shishou from now on.”

“Y-Yes! Shishou-sama!”

Muir answered energetically. Rarashik nodded as if satisfied by her response. Arnold sighed with relief, as if he had just finished an important job.

“By the way, Arnold, what are you going to do?”

“Yes?”

“Are you going to train with this girl too?”

“Um... Is that... No good?”

Arnold tried to take advantage of the opportunity. Arnold had also planned to become stronger by coming back. Rarashik glared at him for a bit, but sighed and shrugged.

“Well, one person, two people, there’s no difference. Back when I was still in active duty, my disciples said especially stupid things.”

“Oh, is that so?”

Hihiro opened his eyes a little. Arnold responded to his question.

“I told you, right? She is the one who created Binding . Everyone came trying to become her disciple. Rather, most of the people who stand at the top of this country are Shishou’s disciples.”

According to Arnold, the King and even the Three Beast Saints were her disciples. Hearing that, Hihiro reaffirmed that this woman called Rarashik was an incredible individual.

“Rather than that, I’m surprised that a perverted old man like you was able to learn from her.”

“Don’t call me a pervert! It’s been a while but you haven’t forgotten about it, huh, you bastard!”

However, Hihiro was serious about his question. It wouldn’t be strange to wonder how Arnold, who was neither royalty nor a citizen, but just an adventurer and a cook, came to be taught by someone so amazing.

“W-Well, I can understand why you might ask that. I was just lucky...”

“Lucky?”

“I was forced to take him in.”

“S-Shishou!”

Hearing this, Hihiro frowned and looked back and forth between the two. Muir blankly looked at them in the same way.

“It was a request from an old drinking buddy. Arnold-boya was brought by that person and he asked me to look after him.”

“Hmmm.”

“No, what do you mean ‘hmmm’? And, if it’s just by name then you know him.”

“Huh?”

“It was Judom-san.”

“Judom? If I remember correctly, he’s the kingdom’s guild master, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“I see. You said he was an acquaintance, but it was that kind of a relationship.”

“Pretty much. I was introduced to Shishou by that person and that’s how I came to be trained by her.”

“I didn’t want to. I was forced to do it.”

Arnold cringed hearing those words. They were the truth so he couldn’t deny it and could do nothing but

become depressed.

“But it’s a pretty nostalgic story. When Arnold was young he looked so cute, unlike the old man face he has now.”

Rarashik smiled as she recalled old memories.

“W-Wait, Shishou!”

As if embarrassed, Arnold raised his head and shouted.

“Ah, by the way, what are you going to do, boya?”

“Ha?”

Hiiro instinctively responded after being asked so suddenly.

“No, I’ll be training these two, but you... Arnold?”

“Eh? Um...”

Arnold felt troubled and scratched his head. As for why, it was because Hiiro was not a Gabranth. This training was for the Gabranth to learn the ability to use *Binding* . However, for a human like Hiiro, there was almost no meaning to this training.

(I mean, Hiiro can’t even use Binding ... What do I do...) Not knowing how to respond, Arnold looked toward Hiiro. Then, Hiiro answered curtly: “I don’t need it.”

(I’m not some sports enthusiast. Like hell I’m doing training for Gabranth.) Rather than that, Hiiro wanted to do more training with his *Word Magic* . He determined that if he were to do such supposedly strict training, he would have no time left to train on his own.

“Hmm, I had an interest in boya, too.”

Rarashik said so in a somewhat dejected tone.

(You have to be kidding me. She’s seen me using Word Magic . If she gets too curious she’ll happily turn me into her guinea pig.) Hiiro got goosebumps thinking of that. He thought that she would probably ask him about his magic until she was satisfied and run experiments on his body. He decided that he will never become a disciple of hers.

“How long will the training take?”

Hiiro asked Rarashik, who turned to face Muir.

“Hmm.. This jou-chan herself is... Well, in order to train her to the level of holding her own as an adventurer, it’ll take at least six months. Fortunately, her level is already decent, so basic combat training, *Binding* and practical techniques. With all of that, it’ll take about that long.”

Hearing that it would take six months, Hiiro had already come to a decision. He turned to face Arnold and Muir.

“Is that so. Then, this is goodbye.”

Muir gasped and looked sad, while Arnold shrugged as if to say ‘I thought so’.

“I thought so. Well, it can’t be helped.”

Arnold had already given up, but Muir hadn’t and began to talk.

“W-Why? Even if you don’t train, why don’t you stay in this country?”

“Sorry, but I have my own goals.”

“G-Goals?”

“Yeah, to see the world. I can’t sit idly for six months.”

Muir looked downcast hearing Hiiro’s words. It was only for a short time, but looking into Hiiro’s eyes she understood that he wasn’t the kind of person to change his mind just by listening to other people.

She understood that she couldn’t do anything about it. Looking at her, Arnold had a bitter smile on his face. He knew that Hiiro was that kind of person so he wasn’t surprised, but to Muir, he was someone who journeyed together with them and she was sad to see him leave.

If you look closely they may seem like family, but they were of different races and Hiiro definitely didn’t think of them as family. But Muir took a liking to Hiiro. If she were to honestly say so, she didn’t want the person who was like an older brother to her to leave.

However, they knew that Hiiro would never change his mind once he decided something.

(I don’t think we can bait him to stay six months with food...) Arnold thought that, noticing that Hiiro showed an abnormal tenacity when it came to food, but decided it was impossible and shook his head.

“...Hey, Hiiro. What are you going to do from now on?”

“Good question. After taking a little time to gather information I’ll take a look around the continent, and after that...”

Hiiro was in the middle of talking, but noticing Rarashik was looking towards them with a curious expression on her face, he stopped.

“...Is none of your business.”

“...Haa, I thought so.”

Arnold said so, but he had also noticed Rarashik staring at them and didn’t press him further.

(He’s probably going to the Evila’s continent. He’s said something about it before.) If Rarashik had heard that, she’d probably ask about how he planned to get there, how a Gabranth was going to get there, and it would become troublesome. Because the two races had just been fighting a war with each other.

That being the case, Hiiro and Arnold decided to keep that to themselves. Sure enough, Rarashik frowned as if dissatisfied.

Towards Muir who was depressed until now, Hihiro looked at her as if looking down on her.

“Hey, Chibi.”

She twitched, then slowly looked up. Their eyes meet.

“In six months, if I become bored I’ll come back. Until then, make sure you become somewhat useful.”

Hihiro didn’t plan on saying those words. Curiously, looking at her being depressed, Hihiro became annoyed. He didn’t know whether he was annoyed towards her, or himself.

However, listening to his words, Muir smiled and he felt as if the tense mood had relaxed a little.

Chapter 47: Arnold's Other Objective

Hihiro, who had decided to leave the Beast Kingdom Passion in a week, was currently being guided through the city by Arnold. Obviously, Muir was also with them. Incidentally, Rarashiku was currently secluding herself in her lab, panting profusely as she said she was going to use the honey she got from Arnold to make her sake.

“It looks like the citizens still don’t know, huh.”

Looking at the state of the people scattered around the streets, Arnold opened his mouth. The Suspension of War. Actually, it might be more befitting to say that the war had been ended. It seemed that the civilians were still unaware of what had transpired.

Of course, if they knew of this, it would become quite a significant issue. Yet such a commotion was absent from within the country.

After what happened, Rarashik’s Spirit Yuki went to investigate the full details of the war. After finding out about it, Rarashik then told Arnold about the circumstances.

“But to think that they would really demolish the bridge. What the hell is the Demon Lord thinking...?”

“B-But this way, nobody ended up getting hurt, right?”

“Nn~, certainly it’s as Muir says. However, to the Gabranth, it would be as if their Pride was uprooted and denied. I’ll bet that they’d be pissed. Well, I’m also a Gabranth though...”

“I don’t really get it, but if nobody died, then I’d consider it to be a good thing...”

“Well, it’s fine to have those thoughts. But the main problem is for what purpose did the Evila do such a thing? If it was the Humas that broke the bridge then I could sorta understand. If they did so, the Evila wouldn’t be able to cross into the Human Continent so easily. However, right now the Evila are fighting the Gabranth. The Humas have got nothing to do with this.”

Unable to comprehend the Demon Lord’s motive, Muir also tilted her head to the side. Then, as if she suddenly realized something, Muir posed Arnold with a question.

“Nee, Oji-san. Speaking of which, why don’t the Humas destroy their bridge?”

“Nn? What’re you talking about?”

“Hora, didn’t you just tell us? Even though they would be able to prevent the Evila’s advance, why haven’t they destroyed the bridge yet?”

It was exactly as Muir had indicated. Between every two continents lied a single bridge that would connect the two. Obviously, this meant that a bridge existed that joined the Humas continent and the

Evila's.

Being referred to as the Schlecken Bridge, neither its size nor its durability could be compared to the Gedult Bridge. It was a structure that even the Humas would be able to break if they wanted to.

"It's not that they didn't want to destroy it, they were not allowed to."

".....How come?"

Muir tilted her head to the side with a *koku*³³.

"The bridge always has an Evila guard posted there."

"Ah, is that so?"

"Also, it seems that the person protecting the bridge is a troublesome fellow."

"Troublesome?"

"Aa, I'm pretty sure their name was.....Iraora?"

"Is that person strong?"

"Aa, they're ridiculously strong, or so they say. Once, Judom-san also affirmed that."

While overhearing the conversation as if it didn't concern him, Hiiro narrowed his eyes as he continued walking. If the SSS-ranker Judom Lankars had said so, then this Iraora's strength was probably the real deal.

To begin with, if they were entrusted with protecting such an important bridge, there was no doubt that they must be a person with substantial abilities.

"Moreover, it seems that they used to be a member of the Cruel Brigade. They're probably really strong."

The Demon Lord's private bodyguards, the Cruel Brigade, were a group that consisted of only 6 people. It went without saying that those 6 possessed exceptional strength. Even if you gathered ordinary adventurers in the hundreds, they wouldn't even be deemed a match for such veterans.

"I see, if such a person was protecting the bridge, it'd be hard to try and destroy it."

"Well, even if the bridge was destroyed, the Evila would probably just cross the sea so I doubt it would make a difference..."

In a sea that contained horrifying monsters and treacherous whirlpools, trying to traverse such an area would undoubtedly be perilous. Even so, Arnold assumed that the Evila would cross the sea anyway.

"By the way, where are you planning on going from here?"

"Ah? Obviously, I'm headed to the guild. We got something that we can hand in for some cash, right? You know, like what we got from that damned snake."

Hearing Arnold's words, Hiiro paused as he suddenly recalled what had happened.

"Nn? What's up, Hiiro?"

"....."

"Oi, why're you looking away?"

"....."

".....You, did get the spoils, right?"

"....."

"Yo~sh, yosh, yosh. Let's calm down a bit. At that time, thanks to the cute and angelic Muir, we were able to successfully kill the Clay Viper, right?"

"....."

Being called cute, Muir became flustered. However, Hiiro remained still as he continued to avert his gaze.

"After that, Muir and I exited the Gree Caves first, leaving you to go and get the spoils, right?"

"....."

"You took quite a long time when you were in that cave.....you, what exactly were you doing in that time?"

Hiiro was met with a gaze full of suspicion. As the blistering stare was approaching him, Hiiro reluctantly used a scissors gesture to puncture Arnold in both eyes.

"Angyaaaaaaaaa!"

Arnold began rolling around on the ground while covering his eyes. Arnold's sudden strange behavior garnered the attention of all the surrounding people.

"Yosh, let's go Chibi."

"Hold it, kora. Oooooooooooooooooiiiiiiiiiiii!"

Seeing Arnold's swift recovery, Hiiro was impressed.

"Tenmeeee³⁴! How 'bout you give us an explanation!?"

As if he was a Yakuza, Arnold glared at Hiiro with bulging eyes³⁵. Hiiro considered poking Arnold's eyes again. However, Arnold was at a fair distance from Hiiro. Whether he consciously took such actions due to his previous experience or not remained to be seen. Either way, Hiiro had no choice but to explain what had occurred.

"Did some weird fellow take all of the snake's spoils?"

“Aa.”

“Name?”

“.....No idea.”

“You forgot, didn’t you.”

“I just didn’t have any interest in it.”

Hiiro puffed his chest out, as if saying he didn’t do anything bad.

“Nn~ But is there such a fellow that’s capable of doing that? In addition, Hiiro was their opponent, you know. In the first place, why the hell would they be gathering the snake’s corpse?”

“—The hell would I know?”

“As I thought. What do you think, Muir?”

“Etto...maybe they wanted to make them a grave...or something?”

“Oo~! As expected of Muir! What an adorable idea!”

Being hugged tightly, Muir painfully struggled slightly. Looking at the two, Hiiro spoke a single word.

“Lolicon.”

“At least call me a baka parent you boke³⁶~!”

Arnold roared as if to say ‘How are you going to compensate me if I get another title attached to me?’

“Well, to summarize, what happened to me was basically robbery. I had to give up on collecting the snake’s loot. Besides, we’re not really in any financial trouble so you don’t really care, right?”

“...Well, I guess it’s fine. Actually, tell us about stuff like that sooner!! Actually, tell us the moment it happens!”

Arnold was absolutely right.³⁷

“In any case, let’s go to the guild and redeem the rest of the loot from the other monsters.”

The trio moved their legs towards the guild.

The guild was devoid of any adventurers. As expected, it seemed that everyone had been deployed off to the front lines. Seeing Hiiro and company, the staff were completely taken aback. After saying that they had just returned from a journey, the staff were somehow convinced.

As they finished redeeming their spoils, they immediately left the guild.

“What’re we doin’ next?”

“There was another reason why I came to this country, you know.”

“Aa, speaking of which, you did mention something like that. That you had plans to go somewhere...”

“Ou, I just need to go to the King’s Tree for a little bit.”

“ King’s Tree ? Do you know someone from the noble family?”

The King’s Tree referred to a large tree that housed royalty. Because this country had been built using trees as a base to support life, there were no such houses constructed out of stone like those on the Humas Continent. All of them were built out of trees.

As such, the King’s Tree held the same meaning as a king’s castle. It was a place where Gabranth royalty resided.

“No, no. I’m not going there to see the royal family. I have business with a guy that I know who’s working there. If he found out that I came here and didn’t give them a greeting, it’d turn into a pain in the ass.”

Even though Arnold said it would likely be troublesome, the end of his words seemed to bleed with nostalgia. It seemed like he wasn’t all that opposed to meeting them.

At the entrance of the King’s Tree , two people who looked like soldiers were standing guard. In short, they were gatekeepers.

“Excuse me.”

As Arnold called out to them, the two gatekeepers pointed their spears at him, piercing him with their sharp stares. The gatekeepers’ gazes then moved on towards the other two.

“Who goes there?”

Of course, seeing as this was the King’s residence, they had no choice but to be wary. However, as they were in the middle of a war, they were considerably on edge. It was possible that they had yet to be informed about the war’s conclusion.

“I’m nobody suspicious. I just came here because I have something I wanna ask you.”

“Something to ask..... you say?”

As if they were appraising Arnold, they carefully scanned him from head to toe with their stares. After which, a guard opened his mouth.

“We are currently in a state of emergency. You are aware that we are unable to permit any sort of meetings with the people of the King’s Tree ?”

“I’m already aware about the current emergency. However, even if it’s just out here, I was kinda hoping to talk to somebody.”

“.....Who were you hoping to talk to?”

“Well, about that...”

As he said that, heavy footsteps carrying tremendous momentum could be heard from far away. Following

which...

*Dokka*³⁸—!

“Gube³⁹—!?”

Arnold suddenly soared due to receiving an impact from someone who had abruptly appeared. He began rolling across the ground with exceptional velocity. It was as if Arnold had been struck by a speeding car. Following this, Arnold’s body had collided with a tree that was up ahead, finally causing him to stop.

“O-Oji-san!?”

Muir’s eyelids shot wide open as she screamed. The two soldiers were completely stunned, unmoving as if they had their time stopped.

“Did he croak?”

A sinister thought came out of Hihiro’s mouth. However, after sparing a glance at Arnold, his line of sight transferred to the one who had appeared. That person was grinding their teeth, revealing their frustration.

“I can’t believe you! How long are you gonna be in a daze for?! Ou-baka⁴⁰ Arnold!”

From the tobacco held in their lips, smoke rose towards the sky. From what could be observed, this person was a Gabranth woman who seemed to belong to the same race as Arnold. The woman was an astounding beauty and had the same unyielding eyes as Arnold. And yet, her physical stature was very muscular. Furthermore, as the woman wore a maid outfit, her figure evoked an extraordinary sense of incongruity.

As Arnold’s consciousness faded, he held his arm as he saw the figure of the woman glaring at him. Arnold answered with a trembling voice.

“.....Ne..... nee.....-chan”

As the distance between Arnold and him was substantial, Hihiro was unable to hear what he just said. However, Muir had clearly heard him, alternating her gaze between the two siblings.

“Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeehhhhhh!?”

...was how Muir expressed her shock. The two soldiers also displayed similar astonishment.

Chapter 48: His Sister, the Maid

“Let me introduce you. This is my older sister.”

Rubbing his right cheek after getting hit, Arnold introduced the girl.

“Like I’d be satisfied with such an apathetic introduction!”

With a whack on the head, the girl made some distance between her and Arnold.

“T-That hurt!”

“You’re supposed to be an adventurer, aren’t you!? Do you want to get whacked?”

Arnold wanted to retort that he had already been whacked, but saying so would merely make her do it again, so he held back his words.

“U-Um...”

The soldier tried to butt in with an apologetic expression. Arnold’s sister raised her hand and answered them.

“Ah, these kids are fine. This one is my fool of a brother and the other two seem to be with him. Please let them through.”

“Is that true!? If that’s the case, then we can’t complain. Go ahead.”

With a smile, the soldier ushered the group inside.

(Ossan’s sister... She seems to have quite a bit of trust here.) Otherwise, her words would never have let others enter the dwelling of royalty during a time of war. No, even if the country were not at war, getting in shouldn’t have been this easy. Even so, by her words the group easily entered. The trust placed in her must have been considerable.

What they entered was a space like a small dining hall. There were three wooden tables and a counter with a kitchen area behind it. Hiiro’s group took their seats at the various chairs enclosing the tables.

“I’ll get you something cold. Stay put for a second.”

She gave a bright smile and walked towards the kitchen. Hiiro continued observing her.

She had the same blue hair as Arnold, but unlike his short-cut hair, hers was long and neat. Her facial features weren’t bad and her height was on the higher end. She had a thin and soft-looking tail swinging back and forth behind her.

She was worthy of being called a beauty. But a maid that smoked tobacco as she worked was a little bit

off.

But one thing that did catch Hiiro's interest was the top of her head.

(...There's nothing there.)

Just like Arnold, she had no ears. Noticing where Hiiro's attention was directed, Arnold gave a bitter smile.

"So you noticed?"

"Noticed what?"

He had no intention of prying into it, so he played dumb. However, contrary to Hiiro's expectations, Arnold continued.

"Don't misunderstand. Nee-chan isn't a former slave or anything."

Hiiro's eyebrows twitched. He was sure that Arnold lost his ears upon becoming a slave to the human race. He thought that she had lost her ears under similar circumstances.

But his thoughts were immediately refuted. This made Hiiro mildly curious, but he didn't speak up.

"Hey, thanks for waiting."

Arnold's sister came carrying a tray of glasses, the number of which was that of the number of people present.

"It's Passion's specialty Schwartz⁴¹."

It was a clear, sky-blue drink. Looking closely, many bubbles rose and formed within the liquid. Could this possibly be...

(... It's cider.)

It truly was. A so-called carbonated drink. Hiiro never thought he would be able to put such a thing into his mouth after being transported to this world, so he was delightfully shocked.

Making a pleasant gulping sound, he downed the glass in one swig. It was perfectly carbonated and the feeling of it going down his throat was quite pleasant.

"Oh, you drink well! I have more, so drink all you want."

She showed her teeth as she laughed happily.

"Hit me."

Saying that, Hiiro held out his glass. Muir also seemed to be enjoying it as she drained her cup.

After bringing a refill for Hiiro, Arnold's sister lowered herself into a chair. She took the cigarette out and held it in her hand as she blew out a stream of smoke.

“First is that I guess. Could you tell me about those kids, Arnold?”

“Yeah, this ridiculously cute apple of my eye, that pulls at the strings of all of our hearts is the lovely Muir Castrea.”

Arnold’s eyes sparkled as he pointed at Muir.

“M-My name is Muir! It’s a pleasure meeting with you, Oji-san’s sister!”

“Haha, you can call me Raive, Muir. Nice meeting you.”

“Ah, yes... Raive-san.”

She embarrassingly fidgeted as she stared at the woman in front of her. Raive let out a laugh.

“Ahaha, what’s this? This child’s really cute, isn’t she!? Where didja pick her up, Arnold?”

She spoke as she heartily patted Muir’s head. Following the motion of her hand, Muir’s head shook from side to side. However, Raive didn’t seem to notice it at all.

“By the way, Arnold, what was with that introduction? When did you become a lolicon?”

“You’re wrong! Muir is my daughter! Though our blood isn’t connected, we’re father and child!”

Even Arnold’s sister conferred with Hiiro. This was enough to depress Arnold considerably, so he began speaking rapidly.

“Ah, so that’s it? I thought that, due to your lack of popularity, you kidnapped someone’s cute daughter to reap your crop after raising her exactly to your preferences.”

“Who the hell do you think I am!? There’s no way I would do that! Do you really think of your cute younger brother as such a person!?”

“Ah, that was a joke, a joke. About half of it, at least.”

“So half of it was serious!?”

Arnold took severe mental damage from his sister’s words. Seeing Arnold hang his shoulders, Raive let out another spout of smoke and hit him on the back.

“*Geho*⁴²! *Geho*! What are you doing!?”

“Go on. Who’s the other one?”

“Hmm? Ah, that guy. He’s Hiiro Okamura.”

“T-That was quite a simple introduction.”

Raive’s smile cramped for a moment. She considered whether the two were on bad terms, but deduced that they were not.

“But he sure is quiet. He hasn’t been saying anything for a while, but is he alright?”

Hihiro was wholeheartedly drinking his cider. His expression didn't really show it, but he truly was in heaven. He was celebrating his fated reunion with soda.

(Fumu, if they mixed fruits or berries into it...)

As his head filled with thoughts of soda applications, he unintentionally let out smile. Seeing this, Raive asked Arnold once more.

“Is that child alright? He's started smiling for some reason.”

“Y-Yeah, he sometimes does that. Just leave him be.”

“I-Is that so? By the way, you suddenly left and came back just as abruptly. And with companions at that. You better not be planning to go to war, right?”

Her gentle eyes suddenly became sharp.

“N-No, you're wrong. It's true that I was curious about the war, but I didn't come back to join it. I came here to get Shishou to train someone.”

“Hmmm, so did you get permission?”

“Yeah, I'll be under her care along with Muir.”

“Hm? What about that Hihiro kid?”

“Ah, that guy's going to go on a journey after about a week.”

“Is that so?”

“Until then, I thought I would show him around the city. Since I was here, I also decided to drop by and see you.”

“So I'm just an add-on!?”

A fist came into contact with Arnold's skull once more.

“O-Ow!”

“Quiet down and endure it!”

“...By the way, how are things going on your end?”

According to Raive, she had been working here as a maid for a number of years. Contrary to her appearance and personality, she worked diligently and made it up the ranks to the Head Maid.

The King was quite fond of the meals she made and happily ate them. She had heard of the war, but did not participate in it.

It was not that she couldn't fight, but she obstinately stood by her position to not to.

She became a maid because she wished to make people happy. She didn't want to use her powers to harm

anyone after all this time.

That was why she felt great relief upon learning that Arnold did not come to go off to war. He wasn't the best brother, but he was still precious family. She didn't want him to be taken away by the war.

“Did you know about it, Raive?”

“About what?”

“The war is over.”

The cigarette dropped from her mouth onto the floor. She hastily picked it up and put it into an ashtray-like fixture. But her eyes remained open wide.

“W-What are you saying?”

“I understand your reaction. But this is information from Shishou.”

“.....Is that for real?”

She was still half in doubt, but Rarashik's information was quite reliable.

“Yeah, it seems both sides suffered no casualties. They should be returning soon.”

At that time, a large noise sounded out. Everyone turned their attention to its source.

“I-Is that true?”

Standing there was the first princess, who was held from battle. The princess, Kuclear.

Chapter 49: Hiïro and the Girl

“Hey! Were you serious, just now!? Tell me!”

Arnold was lifted up by the scruff of his neck by the person that walked into the room. He looked like he was suffocating.

“Kuu-sama! What are you doing here!?”

Raive was also bewildered by the princess’ sudden visit.

“Ugh....can’t breath...”

Noticing Arnold’s face growing pale, Kuclear quickly loosened her grip.

“Ah, S-Sorry!”

Arnold, who had just been released from her grasp, took a deep breath as he thanked the heavens for extending his life. It really seemed like he was going to suffocate a moment ago. If worst came to worst, he would have passed on to the next world. Even though she was a girl, it was clear that she inherited the Gabranth’s brute strength.

“S-So, can you please tell me!? Is what you said really true? That the information came from that Rarashik?”

Even though Kuclear had not moved a step toward him, Arnold felt so intimidated that he unconsciously swallowed his saliva.

“Ah, eh...yes. That is...”

Arnold told Kuclear what Rarashik had told him.

“Why would the Demon Lord do that to the bridge...?”

Kuclear asked the exact same question that was on everyone’s minds.

“Wouldn’t it just mean that they didn’t want to fight?”

Raive casually commented.

“Actually, it might be just as Nee-chan said. It’s just, it was only just recently that the Evila declared that they wanted to annihilate everything.”

This was during the era of the previous Demon Lord, although nobody was aware of it. Incidentally, Rarashik knew about this, however, she forgot to pass this info on to Arnold and his compatriots.

“But if what you said is true, then Papa and his army should be safe, right?”

“I’d bet. I’m sure we’ll be able to see them as lively as ever.”

Kuclear smiled joyfully at Raive’s words. Even though it was she herself that had suggested to go to war, having her allies come back home without any wounded was undoubtedly something worth celebrating.

“Hn? By the way, who are you guys? Also, earlier you called Raive ‘Nee-chan’ but...”

“Aa, Kuu-sama, this blockhead is my little brother. Also, that girl’s his daughter.”

“Heh, I am the child of the Beast Kingdom Passion’s Beast King Leowald. The First Princess: Kuclear King. Nice to meet you.”

Hearing her introduction, Arnold hastily fell to his knees. Muir, as if imitating him, followed soon after.

“Aaah, it’s fine, it’s fine. I don’t like being so formal. It’s fine to treat me normally. Actually, please do.”

In the presence of such an influential person, Arnold and Muir timidly rose to their feet.

“Hmm, as I’ve heard you are Raive’s....and Muir is your daughter. Nice to meet you.”

Although it was nice to hear her talk in such a friendly manner, because she was a princess, Arnold and Muir could not help but feel tense and confused.

“Ahaha, you’re so cute, aren’t you! I got it! Would it be alright for me introduce you to Mimir?”

Raive was about to say something, however, with the pretense that ‘surely she would also be glad to meet them’, Raive could only accept.

“Hah...somehow, this turned into something really unexpected...right Hihiro....eh?”

Although Arnold was bewildered when the princess appeared, something more surprising had happened while he was preoccupied. That being Hihiro, who was beside him a few moments ago, had vanished.

“....Hihiro?”

Meanwhile, as Hihiro was wondering whether or not there was anything interesting in the King’s Tree, he had begun to wander around. Of course, this was all done without the soldiers noticing.

Transparency

This was the first time he had activated a Double Word Chain skill. As of this moment, Hihiro had transformed into an Invisible Man.

(Yah~ this skill is so broken that I can barely hold in my laughter.)

The soldiers that Hihiro had passed had barely noticed him, to the point that it was as if he had walked through them. Well, there were some that had seemed to sense something was wrong, which caused Hihiro to hold his breath.

(The Gabranth are probably very good at sensing people. Well, even though they can’t see me, I still have a presence.)

The Gabranth have a more developed perception than humans. They have enhanced hearing, touch, taste, smell and sight. Even if he became invisible to the naked eye, they would still be able to sense his presence.

After walking for a little while, he had encountered what looked like a garden. There was a large amount of branches that created a scaffolding, with crops and flowers being grown on top.

(...What?)

Surveying the area, he noticed a girl sitting on a nearby wooden bench as she held a plank of wood.

There was a small hole on the top of the plank. The plank hung over the top of her head with a loop of string tied to the top hole. Even if she were to let go, the plank wouldn't fall to the floor.

Looking carefully, one would be able to see some white paper on it. It resembled a child's sketchbook.

Just when Hiiro was thinking that she might be drawing a sketch of the garden, she looked directly at him in surprise.

“.....?”

At that moment, Hiiro thought that the *Transparency* word's effect had elapsed. However, he felt that the effect was still in place. He thought for the moment that she may just be looking at something in his direction, thus he continued staring at her.

However, to his surprise, her eyes had remained locked onto him. Hiiro looked behind him for something that might have garnered her attention...but there was nothing there. It was clear that she was looking at him. He didn't even consider that his supposedly transparent body was detected.

Hiiro pointed at himself without thinking. When he did, the the girl nodded her head up and down in affirmation.

(...What's going on?)

There were moments where perceptive soldiers had almost noticed him and looked his way. However, there wasn't a single person who looked at him directly, not to mention acknowledging his existence.

When he wrote *Transparency* once, the duration would only last about a minute. However, as he wrote it twice, using the *Double Word Chain* skill, its effect had already lasted for over five minutes.

When he used the new word, he had deduced that the word effect would remain in place unless deactivated.

This cheat-like effect was expected for a spell that costed 300 MP. He assumed that if he used *Double Word Chain* with *Air Writing*, it would cost about 400 MP.

In reality, he had written two words with the *Air Writing* skill. After checking his status screen, he confirmed that it had consumed 400 MP. That much was certain.

400 MP is probably not an amount a regular adventure would have. While this may have been unfair, this didn't really concern Hiiro.

(I'm sure that the effect should still be in place. I should still be transparent. And yet...our eyes had definitely met...right?)

There was no doubt about it. The girl was looking directly at him. She did not just sense his presence, it was clear that she was able to completely acknowledge his existence.

Hihiro quickly surveyed his surroundings, searching for any other witnesses. It appeared that right now, both Hihiro and the girl were the only ones present in the garden. He deactivated his spell, becoming visible. He looked at the girl to see if there was a reaction, but...there was none. Hihiro confirmed that she had seen him.

“...How could you tell?”

She bowed her head over and started to move her hands. It appeared that she was writing something. After she finished writing, she turned the board with the white paper over, presenting him with what she wrote.

[Ghost-san.]

She tilted her head to the side in an adorable fashion.

“You’re mistaken. Or what? Could it be that since her ability to sense the paranormal was so high that she was able to see me?”

The girl blinked her eyes in confusion as she began to write.

[What’s the ability to sense the paranormal?]

“Instead of writing, couldn’t you just talk? It’s a matter of efficiency.”

When the girl heard those words, she grew somber as she made an apologetic face.

[I apologize. Mimir, is unable to speak.]

Hihiro was silent. He understood the significance of those words. She, for some unknown reason, had lost her ability to speak. Judging from her attitude, the cause wasn’t something as simple as a sore throat.

“...Is that so? Sorry about that. Forgive me.”

[No, please don’t worry about it.]

As expected of Hihiro. He wasn’t foolish nor arrogant enough to treat a child, especially one with a disability, disrespectfully. Although his response was a little rough.

“In any case, about before. I’m not a ghost. Do you understand what they are?”

[Yes. It seems the only one in my family that can completely see them is me.]

“I see. No matter what world you’re in, there’s always somebody who has developed a sixth sense.

[.....?]

Hiiro knew that she wouldn't understand what a sixth sense meant. It would be troublesome to explain it to her. Thus, Hiiro just set it aside.

“Don't worry about. It seems that your perceptiveness is much higher than normal.”

[Is that something good?]

“Who knows? But it's better to have it than not, right?”

[Then all is well.]

Seriously considering it to be a blessing, she smiled. Following which, she then took out a handkerchief and wiped her forehead. As it was hot outside, it couldn't be helped.

The girl looked no older than 10 years old. Yet, judging from her smile, she felt a lot older. It was as if she had the smile of an adult.

She had long, reddish-brown hair that grew past her waist. A large, green ribbon was tied around near the top of her head, prominent as if it were her trademark. She didn't look voluptuous, yet her charming, hazel eyes and fair white skin practically ensured that she would grow up to be a beautiful lady in the future.

Her pico-pico beast ears and her flickering beast tail made her look so cute that Hiiro determined that she must be kept away from Arnold. Although Arnold was not a lolicon, Hiiro didn't want to imagine what would happen should Arnold spot a cute girl standing before him.

(For some reason, though, when I look at her face, something keeps bothering me.)

Even though that smile was a genuine smile, it felt unnatural for some reason.

[Ghost-san. What are you doing here?]

“I told you that I'm not a ghost, already. Besides, I just came here by chance.”

[Do you know where this is?]

“The King's Tree, right? It's not like I sneaked in here. As a matter of fact, I was brought here by my companions.”

However, he made sure to leave out the fact that he was just wandering around the King's Tree aimlessly.

[I see. Is this your first time being here?]

“Aaah.”

[I like this place as well. When I was five, an illness took my voice. Ever since then, I come here really often.]

From what she just said, it seemed that she wasn't born a mute. A severe illness caused her throat to be so damaged, she lost the ability to speak.

Silence enveloped the area. This was a sign that meant there was nothing left to say.

(Well, I've solved the puzzle that had been bothering me. I guess I should...)

As Hiiro was about to leave, the girl's leg had suddenly slipped.

“Tsk.”

Hiiro instinctively rushed towards the girl. As he prevented her from falling, he caught her in his arms.

“Darn...without thinking I just...”

As Hiiro began making up excuses in his mind, he laid the girl down on the bench to rest. However, as he looked at the sky, he noticed a blazingly bright sun. It was currently the season of Raer (Summer). If someone stayed out in such conditions for a long time, it would not doubt drain their vitality.

(The fever and her fainting. Along with this amount of sweat. Without a doubt, these are the symptoms of heatstroke.)

Hiiro contemplated about how he should deal with this situation. He had considered just leaving her on the bench, however, there were strong rays of sunlight beaming down which would only worsen her condition.

(A cold towel should be applied to the skin. The subject should be moved into the shade and laid on the side of their head with arms placed underneath. The feet need to be raised with a cold object applied to the sole...wait, am I seriously thinking of treating something like this?)

In that instant, treatment methods for heat stroke had surged through his mind. However, Hiiro realized that such thoughts were unnecessary.

He carried her to the shade, placed a finger on her forehead and proceeded to write something before pausing.

“Why do I have to do this for her?”

He let out a sigh as he removed his finger. He had no obligation to help her. The symptoms were nothing major either. He judged that if she just rested, she would recover without issue.

As he let go of her, the girl opened her eyes. She trembled as she desperately began to write on her plank of paper. After she was done, she showed it to Hiiro.

[Sorry for causing you trouble. Thank you for carrying me all the way here.]

She displayed an apologetic smile. Looking at her face, he saw a single tear drop fall from her eyes. Hiiro narrowed his eyes. He suddenly felt irritated for some reason.

(As I thought, this brat's face is really annoying.)

He had discovered the source of his discomfort throughout the encounter. It was that face filled with a sense of inferiority and pain. That smile, it was one that flipped between pain and happiness. Hiiro scowled as he noticed that expression plastered on to the face of a child.

If its painful then just say it hurts. Even if it's just an expression of agony on your face, it's fine. Yet, for her to force a smile when exposed to such a situation would only make someone feel irritated.

(This brat's such a...even the Chibi's more honest than her.)

Whether it was good times or bad times, Muir was still honest with herself. Actually, she was trying to be true to herself. She had the will to be honest with herself. However, the girl before him probably put on that smile so as to not hurt those around her. It reeked of deceit, for a child to act mature and put on such a facade, it was not something that could be easily accepted.

If it was the usual Hiiro, he would have just ignored the girl. He would just tell it to her face. That he met her by accident while wandering around, taking that chance to leave.

However, in this instance, Hiiro felt that he shouldn't leave the situation in its current state. The feeling was the same as when he had approached the Gree-Caves. If he didn't face this properly, something unpleasant may happen.

He felt that if he didn't address the issue with the utmost effort, he would stray away from his path. However, he was unable to grasp the reason behind his current premonitions.

He was just grasping the situation by instinct. An important crossroad of his life was lying before him. He felt that if he made a mistake now, his existence would turn into a lie.

(I don't really have any deep connection with this person, but...)

Hiiro was a human from another world. This girl was a Gabranth living in this world. There was no way that there would be any sort of connection between them. Yet, at this moment, it was as if his soul was telling him that this was the best choice.

Thus, Hiiro approached the girl whose name he did not know.

“Oi, what I'm about to do now, you are not allowed to tell anyone, got it?”

Saying this, Hiiro approached the girl as he concentrated on his fingertip and started writing.

(Ku~, as expected, the finger's barely moving.)

It was even slower compared to when he was writing the word Sleep. He thought of stopping, however, he was aware that if he stopped while trying to write two words, he would receive a harsh Rebound effect. The moment he had started writing two words, he had no choice but to go through with it.

The girl looked at Hiiro with a blank expression wondering what he was doing. Hiiro just ignored it and concentrated on writing the word. Unlike the Transparency word, Hiiro knew that if he lost focus he would definitely fail.

(This definitely feels like something that cannot be done without a lot of concentration.)

While thinking so, Hiiro focused really hard on moving his finger

[Restore ... Hiiro was writing a word created to help another person.

Cure and Revive also came to mind, but he felt that the word Restore would fit the situation better. In reality, the magic Hiiro chose by instinct was very similar to an already established magic. Of course, Hiiro was unaware of this.

This instinct, in regards to Word Magic, would actually become a very crucial factor in the future.

Although this was not the first time Hiiro chose a word by instinct, somewhere inside him, he felt satisfied with his word choice.

A brilliant white light appeared, wrapping her body in a pale aura. As the light seeped into her body, her sunburnt red skin returned to its former fair white. Her sweating had also stopped.

Following this, the girl felt that she wasn't as feeble as before. She suddenly shifted her gaze towards Hiiro, who was arrogantly looking down at her.

“Now then. Start talking, Ribbon.”

Chapter 50: Mimir and the Boy

A strong feeling flowed through her body when she saw it for the first time. The air at that point was different, in the starry sky there was a pale light, a light that she never noticed before appeared. It was such a strong light that she had no choice but to look at it.

In the space before her, she saw space being distorted by something. When she looked at that point carefully, the figure of a person appeared.

(It that...Ghost-san?)

The little girl was called Mimir, ever since she was born, she was able to see these kinds of things on a daily basis. She tried telling her family about it, but they just made fun of it.

A ghost in this place would mean an Evila's soul. Therefore, there was no way for them to exist here, if they were ever spotted it would be killed quickly by one of the Gabranth guards in this area.

But in the past Mimir had never lied before. There were definitely ghosts that read books. The soul of a dead person wandering around the world. The ghost never talks but it would float in the air and move through walls with ease.

Even if she talked about it no one would believe her. She didn't have a strong personality so she didn't push onto others the things she saw. She just retained, in her own mind, that such obscure beings could exist in this world.

It didn't hurt to look at them and looking at them didn't change her way of life. However, the ghost that she saw before her right now was different, it was looking directly at her.

Usually, when she saw them, they would just look at her and move on without doing anything. But it was different this time.

When she noticed, it was already looking at her. It wasn't looking at her with swaying eyes but it was looking straight at her with solid eyes as if a real person was there. Because of that the ghost piqued Mimir's interest and she stared back.

The ghost was a boy, a boy with black hair and glasses. She thought he looked scary, but seeing how he was surprised as well, the mood between them became lighter.

There was more than enough to represent a solid existence, especially the flowing red robe and the fact that it was standing steadily on the ground. It was her first time seeing this type of ghost.

The ghost pointed his finger at himself and then at her, asking if she saw him or not. She nodded continuously.

At that moment, she felt an even stronger presence from the ghost. The ghost felt no different than someone

who was alive. In that state, it would not be strange if other people could see or interact with him as well.

“...How did you notice?”

The pitch of the voice was not too low nor too high. But yet, for some reason, she wanted to hear more of his voice. It was her first time communicating with a ghost. She hesitated at first but then she wanted to let him know that she couldn't speak, and wrote on her board.

[Ghost-san?]

She waited with expectations for a response, but was surprised at what he said next.

“You're mistaken. Or what? Could it be that since her ability to sense the paranormal was so high that she was able to see me?”

She blanked out in surprise. She heard about ghosts that didn't know they were dead. She assumed that the person before her was an example of that. Actually, she assured herself that was the case.

[What's the ability to sense the paranormal?]

“Instead of writing, couldn't you just talk? It's a matter of efficiency.”

She understood what he meant, but there was a reason why she couldn't speak. She made an apologetic face and said.

[I apologize. Mimir, is unable to speak.]

She was surprised when he understood.

“...Is that so? Sorry about that. Forgive me.”

[No, please don't worry about it.]

What he said was a bit rude, but it didn't make the mood between them worse. It was probably that person's usual attitude. Everyone had a different version of what is normal. Being able to see ghosts was normal for her. Thus, his informal way of talking didn't incite any joy or wrath from her.

“In any case, about before. I'm not a ghost. Do you understand what they are?”

[Yes. It seems the only one in my family that can completely see them is me.]

“I see. No matter what world you're in, there's always somebody who has developed a sixth sense.”

[.....?]

“Don't worry about. It seem that your perceptiveness is much higher than normal.”

[Is that something good?]

“Who knows? But it's better to have it than not, right?”

[Then all is well.]

She was happy. For someone to be able to understand made her truly happy. If her family heard what she said right now they would just laugh, he just accepted it like it was natural.

However, looking at his face he seemed displeased. She thought that he couldn't accept her explanation, but the authenticity in the voice used before made it seem that that was not the case. Something else seemed to be causing his displeasure. Feeling some sweat on her forehead, she took out a piece of cloth and wiped it off.

[Ghost-san. What are you doing here?]

“I told you that I'm not a ghost, already. Besides, I just came here by chance.”

[Do you know where this is?]

“The King's Tree , right? It's not like I snuck in here. As a matter of fact, I was brought here by my companions.”

For the ghost to be guided in here by his companions, Mimir inclined her head, she definitely wanted to meet them.

[I see. Is this your first time being here?]

“Aaah.”

[I like this place as well. When I was five, an illness took my voice. Ever since then, I come here really often.]

When she was 5 years old, she caught a severe cold. She had a high fever that lasted for a long time. When it was finally cured, the illness caused such a horrible throat infection, that it took away her ability to speak.

Everyone was shocked when it happened. Mimir liked singing. She used to come to the garden often with her family to sing to everyone.

When the soldiers listened to her sing, it was like listening to an angel. She was very happy about it. She wasn't born with a talent for war and battle like her sister Kuclear, but to be able to sing with such a beautiful voice and make others happy was something to be proud of.

The family and the residents also enjoyed her singing. To just see their smiles again, Mimir worked even harder to perfect her singing skills.

But all her efforts ended in vain when she lost her voice. Her mother, father, brother and sisters were all dejected when it happened. Seeing a sudden change in the situation, she decided to be less harsh on her self, but doing so made things worse.

When she noticed that her family was sad, it was too painful for her to bear. That was why Mimir decided to put on a smile. One day she would recover her voice and sing again. She put on a smile to assure her family that everything would be fine.

The loss of her voice was not an emotional trauma. The country's top researcher determined that even

with current science and magic, there was no way for her to recover her voice.

But the people around her weren't as sure, they thought that if they had more magic power, then it could definitely be cured. That was why Mimir desperately forced a smile. It was a lowly act, but because she smiled they thought that she'd be fine and felt better.

There was no doubt in her mind that this was the best approach. As long as she smiled everyone would be happy, even if she never got her voice back she would keep smiling and something would...

Mimir, who was sensitive to the emotions of others, was determined to smile for another person, to ensure that they wouldn't feel sad.

Yet at this moment, she wondered if she was still smiling. If she looked at a mirror, she was sure she would be smiling. It wasn't a smile with little emotion, but an authentic smile.

(But why does ghost-san look like he is mad.)

Looking at the displeased ghost, she started panicking. She thought of opening her mouth and smiling, but the moment she was about to do so, the space distorted before her eyes.

(Eh?)

In an instant, she blacked out.

When she woke she found herself lying under the shade of a tree. Ghost-san was also beside her. She felt a weak warmth on her body. That was probably from this person carrying her to this location.

She didn't think a ghost would be able to touch another person. This might be a special ghost. She expressed her thanks by quickly writing something on the board.

[Sorry for causing you trouble. Thank you for carrying me all the way here]

Yet after saying so, he still had a displeased look on his face. She was so nice to him, yet there was no improvement in his displeased expression. She thought that there was no way for her to express her concern except by speaking aloud.

With that in mind, tears started welling up in her eyes. She was still smiling, but she wanted to return the gratitude by saying something.

This was the first time that she was moved to this extent. She felt that she had no choice but to express her thanks by speaking.

He looked like he was making a hard decision. He gritted his teeth and said with a serious expression.

“Oi, what I'm about to do now, you are not allowed to tell anyone, got it?”

She looked at him with a blank face. At that moment, white light started to appear from his finger and moved toward her body. It was bit scary at first, but the moment his finger touched her body, she felt warmth spread throughout her body.

(Bindingmagic...?)

She felt something like a gentle breeze on a warm day flow through her body. It was a pleasant feeling, so comfortable that she forgot what she was concerned about a few moments ago.

Her body tingled for a moment and then warmth slowly flowed into her body. She even felt the mood become better as well. She had no idea what happened but she felt much better.

It felt like she was reborn. Then, the boy said to the bewildered Mimir.

“Now then. Try talking, Ribbon.”

Chapter 51: Promise Between the Two

Hiiro got irritated looking at the girl who's face was still blank, not having reacted to his words yet. Reluctantly, he lightly flicked her forehead.

“...Ya.”

She was surprised at suddenly getting hit and held her head with both hands, but her voice, as faint as it was, had definitely been heard.

However, the girl seemed to have not realized it herself and began to write on her notebook. Seeing that, Hiiro snatched it away from her.

She gasped, then extended both hands toward Hiiro. Though she had not said anything, it seemed that she was demanding he give it back.

“If you want me to give it back, then try telling me so.”

“...!”

Mimir glared at him with eyes that said ‘You know that I can’t talk’. Her eyes, however, were tearing up and she was not scary in the slightest.

“Listen. I hate kids that hold back despite being kids. If it hurts, say it hurts. If it’s painful, say it’s painful. If there’s something you want to do, say you want to do it. The brat that I know is at least more honest about herself than you are.”

Because she doesn’t have her paper she grinded her teeth, not being able to say what she wants to say. Seeing her like that, Hiiro lets out a small sigh and puts the board aside. Then...

*Punii*⁴³...

Hiiro pulled on both of her cheeks.

“I-It hurts! It hurts!”

“See, your voice did come out.”

“...Eh?”

Unconsciously, the girl placed her hand on her throat. She couldn’t hide her confusion at the thought that she had just spoken.

Time seemed to have stopped for the girl, but ignoring that, Hiiro continued to speak.

“Listen, never tell anyone that it was me who brought back your voice.”

Mimir widened her eyes, wondering why Hiiro would ask that. She thought that if Hiiro really did fix her voice, then she should tell her family so that she and everyone else could thank him for what he had done. But Hiiro told her not to do that.

“Eh... Why?”

“No questions. I’ll be the only one asking questions from now on. You will answer them. Deal with it.”

Being told these things in rapid succession, Mimir unconsciously nodded.

“Alright, first thing. I’ve guessed it already, but are you related to the royal family?”

Noting that she was relaxing by herself in the garden of the King’s Tree , Hiiro thought that she was not a civilian.

Also, her way of greeting him resembled that of Lilith, the princess of Victorias that had summoned him. From the mood, he had determined that she was related to the royal family somehow.

“Y-Yes. I-I am called Mimir King.”

Hearing that, Hiiro clicked his tongue.

(If I remember correctly, the name of the king is Leowald King. That means... This is turning into a bigger deal that I thought it’d be.) He had thought that she was related to the royal family, but her being the daughter of the king was outside his expectations. He didn’t think that a princess would be allowed to play by herself in a place like this.

(Guess it means that public order in this country is just that good.) After thinking that, Hiiro asked another question.

“Like I said earlier, the fact that I fixed you with my magic has to be kept a secret. In fact, don’t tell anyone that you even saw me here. Just tell everyone that you don’t know the reason why you’ve been cured. Got it?”

“B-But why?”

“I told you ‘no questions’, right?”

Mimir looked downcast at being told not to talk about Hiiro’s existence. To her, it wouldn’t be enough no matter how much she thanked him. She wanted to officially invite him to the King’s Tree . But then, she suddenly realized.

(Ah, that’s right. This person is a ghost. Everyone else can’t see him...) She thought that was the reason why Hiiro didn’t want her to speak about him to anyone.

In reality, Hiiro was panicking. Following a tingling sensation from his conscience, he ended up restoring her voice. He thought that it’d be a big deal if she were a civilian, but now it was even more so knowing that she was a princess.

If this were to be found out, he would without a doubt have the eyes of the kingdom’s royal family on him. He wanted to prevent that from happening no matter what. He wanted to avoid anything that would restrict

his freedom.

“I’ll be going now. If I stick around it looks like I’ll be involved in something troublesome.”

“Ah, please wait.”

“Listen, just be happy about the fact that you have your voice back. That’s what being a kid is. Just don’t tell anyone about me.”

Hiiro said so as if to discard what Mimir wanted to say. Then he began writing the word Transparent again.

“Ah, your name! Please tell me your name!”

Mimir shouted, wanting to know at least that much. Hiiro answered her while his back was still towards her.

“You don’t need to know.”

After saying that, Hiiro began to turn transparent. In Mimir’s eyes, however, he still appeared as plain as day. Hiiro began to run and leave that place.

“Ah...!”

She tried to call out and stop him, but Hiiro was soon out of her field of view.

(I couldn’t say anything... Thanks or even his name... Even though I received such a great present...) It was something so great that no other person has been or would be able to give her. It was something that she had once lost, and though she had longed for it, there seemed to be no hope of ever getting it back.

However, Hiiro tore apart that truth with ease and gave back Mimir’s most important thing. She wanted to thank him. She wanted to hear his name. And above all, she wanted to talk with him more.

Noticing that the board Hiiro took was lying on the ground she picked it up, then her eyes opened wide in surprise.

“This is a loan. I’ll have you pay me back sometime. Don’t forget it.”

She didn’t know when he wrote it, but answered ‘yes’ in a small voice nevertheless. She decided in her heart that because no one else could see him, she must be the one that repays him for his favor.

(Ghost-san...)

As she looked toward the direction Hiiro left, a guard who was on patrol in the garden came and called out to her.

“Mimir-sama, is everything alright?”

“Yes, thank you for always worrying about me.”

“No no, Mimir-sama is like an angel to us. It goes without saying that we will protect you.”

“Thank you very much.”

The guard bowed deeply.

“I do not deserve such thanks. I shall come again. Mimir-sama, please look after your health and return to your room at an appropriate time.”

“Yes, I understand.”

Mimir answered the guard while smiling and the guard also smiled and left.

The guard who left the garden was lost in thought while walking with a smile on his face.

(Maaan, Mimir-sama is as cute as always. And her voice... I'd love to hear her sing again. Ah, that's right, I can hear it any time. Because Mimir-sama's voice is... Her... voice...) He stopped walking and the spear he was holding drops to the ground. His eyes open wide, his mouth agape, making the most surprised look he had ever made in his life.

“It's baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaack!?”

It was said that his shout reached everyone within the King's Tree .

“Hm? What was that should just now?”

Arnold tilted his head hearing the shout that reached all the way to the dining hall. Not only Arnold, but everyone else also had the same question.

“The voice just now... From the garden?”

Kuclear, while moving her ears, *piku piku*⁴⁴, looked towards the west.

“Oji-san?”

“Hm? What is it, Muir?”

“I don't see Hihiro-san anywhere...”

“Aah... He probably went exploring inside the King's Tree or something?”

“As I thought?”

“It'd be good if he doesn't cause too much trouble.”

This was not in the city, but the residence of the royal family. If he were to wander around as disrespectful

as he always was, there was a chance he could be captured by the soldiers. Arnold started sweating just thinking about what would happen if Hihiro wandered into one of the private rooms of the royal family.

(I-If it gets found out that Hihiro is actually a Humas, and if he does something stupid, I won't get off lightly either, will I... Haa⁴⁵, I beg you, please don't cause any trouble) Arnold begged from the bottom of his heart.

"It bothers me, so I will head towards the garden. What will you two do? I believe Mimir, whom I talked about before, will be there as well."

Kuclear asks Arnold and Muir.

"If I remember rightly, she is your sister, correct?"

Arnold asked to verify.

"Yes. She is still nine years old, but her way of thinking put adults to shame. Her intelligence can't even be compared to mine. And her songs..."

"Songs?"

"Ah, never mind! Anyway, let's go!"

What she neglected to finish saying bothered them a little, but as she had stopped talking and began to walk, Arnold and Muir hurriedly followed behind her.

"Ah, what are you going to do, Nee-chan?"

"I have work to do. I don't have free time, unlike you."

"Oh, is that right. Sorry for having so much time on my hands!"

Muir smiled like she was having fun watching their exchange. Leaving behind Arnold's sister Raive, the three of them head towards the garden.

Chapter 52: Arnold and Company's Suspicions

A large amount of soldiers occupied the garden's entrance.

“What the hell happened here!?”

Arnold's group, who had rushed here after they heard a sharp cry, widened their eyes in wonder. As Kuclear saw what happened, she involuntarily shouted with a loud voice.

They couldn't believe that something would occur in the garden. Thinking that Mimir could've gotten involved caused Kuclear to become frustrated. She had to first ascertain Mimir's safety.

“Mimir? Where's Mimir?”

“Ah, Kuclear-sama⁴⁶! A-Actually...”

Something had suddenly occurred to Kuclear. If something unfortunate had indeed happened to Mimir, everyone's faces would have been colored by despair. However, looking at their faces, Kuclear was unable to hide her confusion.

The reason for this was because there was nobody shedding tears. On the contrary, people were displaying expressions of joy. No, if you actually looked closer, tears were being shed by several people.

(W-What in the world happened here?)

Kuclear was taken aback by the soldiers' strange appearance. She tilted her head, wondering whether something worth rejoicing so frantically over really occurred here. But first, she had to find the cause of this commotion.

“What's wrong? Why're you making such an expression?”

“Mimir-sama..... Mimir-sama is.....Uu~.....”

“Aa~ Mou⁴⁷~! Speak clearly, damn it! What happened to Mimir!? Actually, where is she?!”

“I'm here, Kuu-oneesama⁴⁸.”

Kuclear's body instantly froze with a jolt.

(Just now...what did I just hear?)

She couldn't help but doubt her own ears. However, she could never forget that voice. The voice she had just heard was certainly a voice that she was familiar with a few years ago. But it was unfathomable. Even if one thought about hearing such a voice again, it was a voice that should have been impossible to hear again.

It was precisely because of this that she had obviously assumed that the voice that entered her ears was an auditory hallucination. However, before Kuclear whose body had been rigidly frozen, the figure of a girl slowly emerged.

From Kuclear's perspective, the image of the girl who had eaten breakfast with them this morning was projected onto this girl.

Forgetting to blink, Kuclear just stared at the girl. Looking closer, she realized that something was off.

She was not carrying her inseparable paper and board used for communicating her thoughts. As Kuclear was wondering what in the world had occurred, the girl's lips quietly moved.

"Kuu-oneesama."

There was no mistake. At present, right in front of Kuclear's eyes, her little sister Mimir had opened her mouth. Brought forth from those lips was a charming voice that conveyed a loving atmosphere.

"H.....how.....are.....you...?"

Kuclear was unable to comprehend it. However, it was indisputable. She was able to unmistakably recognize this voice as Mimir's

"We..... we can now sing songs together again."

Mimir's lips trembled as she began to shed tears. Seeing such an emotional Mimir, Kuclear embraced her.

"I-It hurts, Kuu-oneesama."

Even though Mimir closed her eyes in pain, she smiled as she felt her sister's joy.

"I'm happy...I'm so glad...thank god..."⁴⁹

"Yeah.....me too....." ⁵⁰

Both Kuclear and Mimir had huge blobs of tears falling out of their eyes. Kuclear slowly brought her face in front of Mimir. She gently used her fingers to wipe Mimir's tears.

"B-But how? How come your voice suddenly—?"

Indeed, this was the most prevalent question. Mimir's illness was one that not only famous doctors couldn't solve, but even Passion's most prided researchers couldn't cure.

Of course, it was undeniable that she was overjoyed about her improved condition. However, as expected, she also wanted to know what had cured Mimir. Thinking such thoughts would be obvious.

"Eto⁵¹, about that....."

Needless to say, Hihiro's face instantly floated to the surface of Mimir's head. However, she remembered her promise to him which Hihiro expressly proposed, entailing that she would not mention him at all.

(I really want to tell her, though...)

No matter what he may be, he was the person who had saved her. Even if he was a ghost that was unperceivable to everyone else, she had the uncontrollable urge to tell everyone.

“Mimir?”

Due to Mimir not answering her question, Kuclear anxiously frowned.

“Even I’m not too sure what happened.”

“I-Is that so?”

“Yeah. Because today’s wind was quite pleasant, I decided to sun bask in the garden. While I was sunbathing, I became drowsy and nodded off. However, when I woke up, my voice somehow came back.”

“...?”

Of course, Kuclear blanked out⁵². She was skeptical as to whether such a miracle could occur. Mimir began panicking a little as she began to string words.

“B-But you know, in my dream, a Spirit -san came out.”

“A Spirit did?”

“Y-Yes. And this Spirit -san told me this. ‘This is a loan. I’ll come back and collect my due so don’t go forgetting it’. Maybe the Spirit -san just decided to cure me on a whim..”

Mimir judged that this degree of story-telling would be fine as she arranged Hiiro’s words. However, Arnold, who was overseeing Mimir and the others, suddenly turned pale as he heard her words.

(Oi, oi. Those words just now..... they couldn’t be..... right?)

From the flow of the conversation, one was able to observe that Mimir, who had lost her voice, was suddenly able to become able to speak again. Moreover, from Kuclear’s extreme delight, it could be determined that Mimir’s symptoms were considerably severe. However, what had cured her was just simply going to sleep.

Mimir said that she was cured by a Spirit . However, are Spirits even capable of something like that in the first place? Even if they did heal her, Arnold felt like they wouldn’t do something like ask for repayment. Furthermore, those words that it had left her...

That use of words. Arnold felt like somebody else had used similar wording. A teenager with an arrogant attitude that Arnold was very familiar with.

(F-For now, wouldn’t it be better if I checked this...?)

Just as this thought entered his mind, Arnold felt someone tug on his clothes. It was Muir.

“N-Nee~ Oji-san. That conversation just now...”

It seemed that Muir was also concerned.

“A-Aa. But what do you think that guy’s motive is for doing this? I mean, the subject was the princess. Fixing such an illness in one go...well, if it’s that guy then he could probably cure it. But wouldn’t doing such a thing draw attention to himself?”

“B-But those words.....”

“I-I know what you mean...I guess even princesses tell lies. If it was a total lie though, she’d dress up the message to make it sound Spirit-like and sacred. To me, those words felt strangely realistic.”

As it was actually Hihiro himself who had said those words, it was obviously going to sound extremely realistic. However, as they were unaware of that fact, they were still undecided as to whether it was truly Hihiro who had cured the disorder.

The main reason for this indecision was because there was no merit. For Hihiro, who inherently loathed attention, he would avoid anything that would make him conspicuous. Especially since he was not a Gabranth, he deliberately made sure he was careful when and where he used his magic to avoid being found out.

Well, when food was involved, everything went out the window....

However, Hihiro was one who would act upon his gains and losses, or at least that was how Arnold and the others had evaluated him.

It was precisely because of this that curing a princess with magic at one of this country’s famous monuments, the King’s Tree, was something unfathomable for Hihiro to do.

However, the princess’s words indicated that her disorder was cured instantly by a mysterious phenomena. Taking this into consideration, only the teenager that they had grown to become overly familiar with came into mind.

“While I’m still uncertain, if this was Hihiro’s doing, then it looks like a hush order was put in place. Although looking at the Princess’ state, it’s likely that she met Hihiro.”

“Wouldn’t it be better if we made sure?”

“You’re right. Although I doubt I can...wait, can you go ask her, Muir?”

“Me?”

After processing what Arnold had asked her, it was no wonder that Muir became surprised.

“Aa. The person in question’s a nine-year-old kid. Wouldn’t it be easier for you to approach her?”

“U-Un. I got it.”

As she was going to be talking to a princess, Muir nervously set off to complete the mission she had been entrusted with.

Chapter 53: Identity of the Ghost and Friends

“In any case, this is wonderful news! Whether it was the work of a spirit or not, Father and the rest of the family will be thrilled!”

Kuclear and the soldiers expressed great joy at what had occurred. Because it turned into such a commotion, Arnold could only let out a sigh.

“Um, Kuu-oneesama, who are those people that you brought with you?”

“Ah, right. Let me introduce them to you. You guys, come over here.”

Hearing what Kuclear said, Arnold and Muir moved toward Mimir.

“Mimir, this man is Raive’s younger brother. Also, the girl is his daughter.”

“I’m Arnold Ocean, a chef and an adventurer.”

“I-I’m Muir Castrea. An a-adventurer.”

Mimir smiled as she slightly raised her skirt before bowing to them.

“I am the Second Princess of the Gabranth Kingdom’s Capital Passion, Mimir King. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Faced with such polite greeting, Arnold and Muir unhesitatingly lowered their heads. She was, without a doubt, a young princess. Mimir held a certain air of authority, one that should not be disrespected. Arnold was especially wary as she had a connection with his older sister, Raive, who was the person he had feared the most.

“...You look similar.”

As Mimir looked at Arnold’s face, Arnold could only let out a dumbfounded “Eh?”

“You’re Raive’s little brother, right? You have the same eyes.”

As Mimir giggled right after looking at him, Arnold couldn’t help but become embarrassed.

“That’s right. Now that Mimir’s illness is cured, I need to tell Mother. You guys wait here and play with Mimir.”

Kuclear left the area in a flash, her smile never leaving her face. She was truly overjoyed. The guards also returned to their posts as Mimir walked back to the garden.

“If it is alright with you two, shall we talk in the shade?”

Hearing this request, Arnold placed a hand on Muir as he pushed her body forward. Arnold could tell that

Muir was a bit tense via eye contact as she felt that she needed to bow to Mimir or something.

Arnold wanted Muir and Mimir to be able to talk alone with just the two of them. Thus, he decided to stay there and watch over them.

“Ah, Arnold-sama?”

“Ah, w-well, I am a bit tired so I’ll just stand over here.”

“...Haaah.”

Unsure of what she should say, Muir remained silent. Normally, if someone was tired, then they would want to sit down and rest on a bench. However, as was overly nervous, he made a flustered response.

Muir blanked out for a moment before putting on a smile.

“Please come this way.”

“Y-Yes!”

Muir rigidly approached, causing Mimir to laugh.

“Fufu, please don’t be so tense. Even if I’m a princess, I wish to talk to you as myself right now. If it alright with you, may we be friends?”

Mimir offered her hand and looked at Muir. Muir pointed to herself and waited for a response. Mimir nodded.

“I-I’d like that as well! I-It’d be an honor!”

“Fufu. In which case, Muir-sama—”

“P-Please wait a minute!”

“Eh?”

“W-Well, you don’t need to put ‘-sama’ on the end.”

“The how shall I address you?”

“T-There is no need to use honorifics!”

“Fufu, is that so? Then please call me by my name, Mimir, as well. Make sure to leave out the ‘-sama’”

“E-Eeeeeeeeeeh?!”

As Muir was presented with a huge hurdle, she couldn’t help but voice her surprise in a loud voice.

“If you do not wish to do so, then I shall keep addressing you as Muir-sama.”

“Eh...a...Uu~”

Muir was speechless as thoughts whirled around inside her head. Seeing her flustered over such a small

thing made Mimir laugh out loud.

“Fufu, you are an interesting person. Please just call me by my name.”

“E-Eh...well...that....lets try...Mi-Mimir...chan”

“Okay, Muir-chan.”

Muir felt a burden lifting from her heart when the Princess had called her by name.

“Aaah, I said it! I called the Princess using ‘-chan’”

Muir was worried, uncertain and flustered when she realized she had called the Princess ‘Mimir-chan’. She placed both hands on her head, not sure as to what she should do or expect. Seeing Muir’s befuddled expression, Mimir laughed again.

“Please don’t worry about it. In this kind of situation, we need to stop using honorifics. That way we can get along as friends.”

“.....”

Her offer made Muir happy, however, as Mimir was a princess, Muir was unsure as to what she should do. Arnold, who was overlooking the situation, had subtly encouraged Muir to keep going.

It seemed that Mimir possessed a formidable personality. She carried an air of authority. As one would expected of Kuclear’s younger sister.

“...I understa...Uun⁵³, I got it, Mimir-chan.”

Muir summoned all her courage to say those words. As Mimir returned her sentiments with a happy expression, Muir felt relieved.

Mimir held both of Muir’s hands and stated.

“Today is truly a joyous day. I was able to meet that person, and I was even able to make some new friends.”

When Mimir said ‘that person’, Muir’s shoulders twitched in response.

“Um, excuse me...”

“Nh? What’s wrong, Muir-chan?”

“Eh, aa, that...that person you met a while ago...were you referring to that ?”

Mimir’s ears slightly twitched, however, Muir didn’t notice it.

“Oh, yes. Even though it happened in a dream, he was a very elusive person. Although our exchange was a bit one-sided, I’m still very grateful for what he did.”

Apparently, she possessed a great deal of gratitude to ‘that person’.

“Ah, well...Ah, no...You know...that. Um, was that Spirit wearing a red robe?”

Mimir froze instantly. Following this, she grasped Muir’s hands with both of hers. The atmosphere between them had completely changed.

“M-Muir-chan! Could it be that you are also aware of them?! Can you also see Ghosts !?”

Mimir abruptly turned ecstatic.

“U-Um, well, haha...eh, what?”

Because of Mimir’s misunderstanding, Muir began to panick.

“If you know that person then please tell me!”

She pleaded with a somber expression.

(What? She didn’t meet him? Ah, but the robe..she remembered that robe...then they met, but they didn’t talk?) Muir realized that Mimir had apparently no knowledge about Hiiro.

“Red robe...Yes, there was a red robe! And he also had glasses!”

Muir recognized it immediately. Even if Mimir didn’t say anymore, it was clear who the Spirit was.

(So it was Hiro-san...but...a Ghost ? What in the world happened?) Thinking such, Muir decided that this would be good time to go over the situation in detail.

“Neh, Mimir-chan, that person...he’s not actually a Ghost , right?”

“What?”

“Because if he was a Ghost , he wouldn’t be wearing a red robe or have glasses, right?”

“Ah...”

As she realized her mistake, Mimir shut her mouth. Her cheeks glowed crimson with embarrassment. She regretted that she had failed to keep her promise.

Because she was so excited that Muir was able to see ghosts like her, she involuntarily told her everything. That part of her was still juvenile in contrast to her mature demeanor.

“Ah, that, um, that is...”

Even though she was flustered she tried to come up with an excuse. Having felt that such a thing had occurred previously, Muir laughed as she spoke.

“It’s fine, Mimir-chan. That person is our acquaintance.”

“S-So you can see them after all!”

“Well, I don’t know exactly what you’re talking about but, he’s a living person named Hiiro. He’s a respectable huma—no, a Gabranth.”

That was a close call. Muir had almost revealed that Hihiro was a Humas.

“Eh, Living?”

“Yeah? Although, I’m not sure why you thought that he was a ghost though...”

“T-That is...”

In all honesty, the atmosphere surround that person was different. He had, at the time of their meeting, a ghost-like presence. It was because of this that she had presumed that Hihiro was a ghost.

(Come to think of it, that person was constantly telling me that he was not a ghost...) She believed that he was a ghost who wasn’t aware of his own death. Making such a big mistake, she felt ashamed.

“Wh-What was I thinking?”

She was so ashamed that she covered her face.

“Ahahah, you’re really cute, Mimir-chan”

“Uu~, I have to apologize to him.”

“Hihiro is not a person to be angry over something like that so you don’t need to worry about it.”

In reality, Muir thought that Hihiro wouldn’t care as it was something that didn’t pique his interest.

(For those who have no interest, they wouldn’t care about such things.) “Ah, Muir-chan. Can you please tell me the name of that person again?”

“Eh? Okay. That person’s name is Hihiro Okamura. He’s a companion that we traveled with.”

“I-I see, so that’s why!”

The ghost said he was led in here by some of his companions. It seemed that those companions were Arnold and Muir.

“Yeah. We arrived here together, but then Hihiro-san suddenly disappeared. I guess he came here.”

“Yes. We met here and talked for a bit.”

“So what happened then? Did he use his magic on you or something?”

At that moment, Mimir’s eye opened wide and nodded in understanding.

“As I thought, that was magic...wasn’t it. In which case, doesn’t that mean that he is a Humas?”

“Eh....Eeeh!?”

Muir involuntarily let out a surprised voice. She turned pale upon realizing that she had just said
Magic .

“Eh, a, that..I said it wrong. It’s just that he’s a person that refers to the ability as Magic .”

It was a poor explanation, yet, Muir had to somehow convince her. Muir knew that they would not be let off easily if the fact that they brought a human to this place was brought to light.

However, Mimir realized what Muir was thinking and just laughed.

“Fufu, please don’t worry about it. I don’t have anything against the Humas people.”

“Eh? Is that so?”

“Yes, it is not the first time that I’ve seen a Humas. Although the first time I met one was a Ghost .”

It wasn’t unusual for Mimir to see ghosts without any animal ears or a tail floating around.

“Huh... Ghost ...”

Muir gulped upon hearing about the ghosts. However, upon seeing Mimir casually talk about them, Muir decided to remain silent about any of her grievances.

“When I first saw him, he had black hair without any sort of beast ears.”

“W-Wait a moment.”

Hearing something that she didn’t expect, Muir panicked as she spoke hastily.

“B-Black hair!? Is that true!?”

“Yes. Black hair, glasses and a red robe. Aren’t these that person’s key characteristics?”

(Eh? How is that possible? Hiiro returned to his human form? ...But why?) This question naturally surfaced to the top of her mind, however, she was unable to come up with any sort of answer. It was unfathomable that Hiiro would return to his human form, especially in the place where the royal family of the Gabranth resided.

However, Muir clearly remembered Hiiro’s Humas form. She began pondering as she had no clue as to what this meant.

“Is something the matter?”

Mimir was worried about what Muir was thinking so she asked. Muir shook her head in a hurry.

“No! Nothing is wrong!”

“Is that so?”

“Un! B-By the way, was his hair really black?”

“Yes. Having such beautiful black hair made me a little jealous.”

Seeing her light chuckle, Muir began wandering why such a thing had occurred. She had determined that the chance of Hiiro revoking his magic was close to nil.

(From Oji-san, I heard that there were spirits called Phoem who can see the truth before them. I’ve

heard that there are some Gabranth who also have that ability.) The one that can see the truth are the Phoem . If someone had that power, they would be able to see through Hiiro's disguise, and see that he was human. There were some people known to have that ability.

Muir didn't know if Mimir had that ability. However, she felt that to prevent Hiiro from being exposed she needed to say something.

"Is it possible, Muir-chan, that you know what magic that person used?"

"Yeah, I know. What about Mimir-chan?"

"Yes. Using a mysterious power, he restored my voice."

"Ah, he also said those words, right?"

"Eh?"

"This is a loan. You'll have to return it someday. Don't forget',"

"Eh... Ah, yes."

"That's definitely something that Hiiro would say. Well, that's what made me think the Ghost was him though..."

Apparently Arnold and company's suspicions were right on the mark.

"Excuse me, but...where would that person be right now?"

"Hmmm, I'm not sure."

"Oh, is that so."

Mimir's shoulders dropped as she made a crestfallen face

"Maybe, because he didn't want to cause any more trouble here, he probably went somewhere else. You were probably also told not to tell anyone about him, right?"

"Y-Yes, that's right."

"As I thought. He might have already left from the and returned to the city. He's someone that really hates standing out."

"Muir-chan, you seem to really know a lot about this person, am I right?"

"Well, I guess so. Even though we only traveled together for a short time, ever since we met him, there was always one surprise after another."

In particular, she was bewildered when faced with Hiiro's outrageous actions and dark motives.

"...I'm envious of you".

"Mimir-chan?"

“I didn’t even have a chance to express my gratitude. He just cured my voice and then left right away...”

“Ahaha. That sounds just like Hiiro.”

“Will we...not be able to meet again?”

“Hmm...it’s not that I don’t understand your feelings...but I think trying to do so will prove difficult.”

“I-Is that so? But he is your companion, no?”

“Yeah, but he’s a person that enjoys his freedom. He probably wouldn’t listen to a word we said. Haha.”

She was unable to say that Arnold had been making all of the food for him. Even if he was treated to a scrumptious meal, she had a feeling that Hiiro would probably never set foot in the again. Should he be found out for some reason, it would cause an uproar.

Not only that, but Hiiro was a Humas. If the Gabranth Princess Mimir and the Humas Hiiro met, it would spell trouble in several different ways.

“Also, it seems that Hiiro will be leaving this place soon.”

“I-Is that true!?”

Mimir raised her voice without thinking. The atmosphere instantly became silent. Upon noticing her outburst, Mimir sat down quickly and spoke in a softer voice.

“I-Is that really true?”

“Yeah. I asked him not to go, but it didn’t work.”

Muir said with a dejected countenance.

Looking at Muir’s expression, Mimir sharply inhaled.

(I-Is there a chance that Muir...might be attracted to that person?) In that instance, Mimir felt something swirl around inside of her. It was as if a tiny needle was prickling her heart. It was a sensation that seemed painful, itchy and ticklish all at the same time.

However, no matter what she felt, she knew that this situation could not be left as it was. Mimir spoke as she looked at Muir and held both of her hands.

“Muir-chan, I will not lose!”

“Eh...a, um, yes...?”

Muir didn’t comprehend what Mimir’s declaration was for.

“I mean, it’s like that, isn’t it? Muir-chan adores that person?”

“Adore...Eh. Eheeeeeeeeeeeee!?”

Muir’s face turned bright red as she stood up in bewilderment.

“That surprised reaction. It was as I had suspected.”

Biting her lower lip a little, Mimir stared at Muir.

“No, Its w-w-wrrrrroooooong! Hihiro is like a older brother to me! That is why...”

Muir waved her hands and tail desperately in denial. However, Mimir still sent her a suspicious gaze.

(T-That can't be! I don't think of Hihiro-san as.....)

As she began seriously considering this, she felt her face grow hot. She desperately shook off those thoughts. She hadn't been conscious of it, however, when Mimir suddenly said something about Hihiro, she felt a fuzzy feeling in her chest.

She wasn't aware whether this was love or not. She was also unable to accept nor deny it. Due to her lack of experience, when Mimir challenged her, she was so confused that she was unable to come up with a reasonable response.

“I won't lose, Muir-chan!”

“L-Like I said, you're wrong!”

When Arnold saw the exchange between those two, he had first thought it was pleasant. However, he suddenly had queasy feeling in his chest.

(I have no idea why, but I really want to punch that Hihiro right now....) Whether this was the power of an Oya-baka, or whether Arnold had awakened as a parent for a moment...no one could say for sure.

Chapter 54: A New Journey

“Oh, what are you thinking, packing your things?”

The one who asked Hiiro was Rarashik, with her hands in her white lab coat and her ears moving *pyoko pyoko*⁵⁴.

“I’m going to leave on a journey immediately.”

“Haa? Immediately... Didn’t you say you’d be leaving in a week?”

She thought it was strange that Hiiro had brazenly come back to her basement and started packing. However, Hiiro said that he was leaving. Even though he said he’d stay for a week in order to gather information.

“This is rather sudden. Did something happen?”

“No, I just did something a bit bothersome.”

“Bothersome?”

“Don’t worry. It’s not something that’ll cause you any trouble, Chibi-usagi... Maybe...”

“What do you mean ‘maybe’! Well, I don’t really care, but do Arnold and the others know?”

“...No.”

Hearing that, Rarashik let out a small sigh.

“Are you fine with that? Without saying anything. How about at least waiting until they come back? To be honest, it’d be helpful if you stayed a little and assisted me in my research.”

Deep in her eyes, a light seemed to shine *pikaaan*⁵⁵, but Hiiro shook his head.

“It’s not like I’ll never see them again. As long as they’re alive I’m sure we’ll see each other again.”

“Nahaha, the same could be said of you, boya.”

“I won’t die.”

Hiiro frowned and thought.

(If I use the word Immortality, then... No, I don’t want to quit being human. I’m fine as is for now.)
He thought that if he used Immortality then he’d be able to stay alive, but there was no guarantee it’ll last indefinitely after he used it, and thinking of the possible risk should he fail activating it, he couldn’t bring himself to use that word.

While he was thinking that, Rarashik talked while smiling like she was having fun.

“Well, putting your level aside, you seem like you’ll live a long life, boya.”

“I don’t know about that. But, I don’t plan on dying in a year or two.”

After checking his bag, he picked it up.

“...Are you really leaving?”

“Yeah, I’m leaving before the King and his men come back.”

“Boya, just what exactly did you do...?”

“Ask that ossan when he comes back. He can probably tell you about it.”

In reality, when Hihiro left the King’s Tree while using Transparency , he saw Arnold and Muir. He had verified that they were heading towards the garden. He figured that if it was them, they would probably be able to figure out most of the situation.

After that, Hihiro went to town and bought anything he thought necessary and put them into the bag he was carrying now.

“Well, if you say you’re going I won’t stop you, but do you have a message you want to leave behind for them?”

Rarashik asked while her ears moved *pyoko pyoko*.

“Let’s see... Nothing in particular.”

Rarashik stumbled forward with a *gaku*⁵⁶.

“‘Nothing in particular’, are you serious!?”

Rarashik looked at Hihiro, thinking he couldn’t possibly be serious.

“Even if you say that... Ah, that’s right.”

“What is it?”

“The next time we meet, let me eat good food to my heart’s content.”

“...And to the jou-chan?”

“Tell her...to become strong.”

“Got it.”

After making sure Rarashik understood, Hihiro began climbing the ladder. Rarashik just stared as he left.

“Yare yare⁵⁷, my disciples sure have a strange companion.”

Rarashik shrugged while sighing in exasperation.

Hiiro, after leaving Rarashik's place, headed immediately to the city exit.

(I didn't say anything before I left, but, well, it's Ossan and company. After they shout and scream they'll probably calm down.) At first he had decided to travel by himself, but traveling with Arnold and Muir was more novel than he had expected. He thought that he wouldn't mind traveling together again if it was with people like them.

(Well, the next time we meet will at best be half a year's time, huh.) While walking, he looked toward the Tree of Origin, Aragon .

(Ossan and Chibi, I wonder how they're doing.)

He looked forward to it a bit.

Arriving at the city exit, Hiiro looked back toward the King's Tree where Arnold and Muir were.

"Later."

Though he sounded a little reluctant, Hiiro continued walking and left the country.

"What did you saaaaaay!? Hiiro leeeeeeft!?"

Long after Hiiro had left the country, Arnold and Muir, who had just returned to Rarashik's laboratory, were dealt a great shock.

"Yup, he left lickety-split."

"N-No way... That's too sudden..."

Muir said with a shaky face, her expression turning bitter.

"T-T-That bastaaaaaard!!"

*bogon*⁵⁸!

Arnold hit the wall with all of his strength. On the wall was a small crater and fragments fell to the floor.

Rarashik sighed while looking at Arnold, who was grinding his teeth.

“Come on, Arnold, don’t break the room. Also, there was a message from the boya.”

“M-Message?”

Muir asked.

“To Jou-chan, no, Muir, he said to become strong.”

“...Hiiro-san said... Is... Is that so...”

Muir understood after hearing those words that the fact Hiiro had left was neither a joke nor a lie.

“Shit! That Hiiro! Why’d he leave without saying anything!”

No, in reality he knew the reason why. He was able to determine after hearing Mimir’s story from Muir that Hiiro would most likely leave the country as soon as possible. The King and his men would return soon. If it was discovered that Hiiro was the one who cured the princess, it would certainly cause a lot of trouble.

Because he didn’t want to deal with that, Hiiro left as soon as he could. Arnold understood that. However, he couldn’t stand that he left without even saying a single word to them.

“Why didn’t he say anything!?”

Arnold was upset, thinking that Hiiro thought that they were worthless and didn’t even deserve parting words. Arnold thought that though it was only for a short period of time, that they had gotten along well on their travels.

Because Hiiro didn’t say anything before he left, Arnold thought that he mustn’t have thought the same and became upset. However, Rarashik told Arnold.

“Arnold, the boya said this. ‘The next time we meet, let me eat good food to my heart’s content’.”

“H-Hiiro did...?”

“Yeah. It seems like the bond between you three hasn’t been severed yet.”

“Oji-san!”

“Y-Yeah...”

Seeing Muir’s joyful expression, Arnold’s eyes started to get hot. If this continued, an old man pushing on years would end up crying because of a shitty, conceited brat. His pride would never allow that to happen.

“H-Hmph! Don’t kid me! I’m not his personal cook! Seriously, that Hiiro!”

Muir looked at Arnold who was putting on a strong front. He was smiling with the corner of his mouth.

“Fufu, Oji-san isn’t honest.”

“W-What on earth is this girl saying! I’m just stating the obvious!”

“Okaaaay okay, I know you’re happy, but let’s get started with the program.”

Rarashik clapped her hands *pan pan* in order to get the two’s attention.

“Program?”

“Yeah, of course. I’m talking about the training. You want to become stronger, right?”

“Ou!”

“Hai⁵⁹!”

In order to one-up Hihiro, it went without saying that this became one of their objectives.

“Then while you’re training, work hard without a single complaint! If anyone complains I’m kicking the person out!”

Listening to Rarashik’s words, Arnold and Muir looked at each other and nodded.

““Hai!””

They both gave an enthusiastic response.

“Just you wait, Hihiro. I’ll punch you first thing the next time we meet!”

Muir, as if hiding her determination, clenched her fists tightly.

(I want to stand next to those two! So I’ll become strong! I’ll become strong enough to be accepted by Hihiro-san! By Hihiro-san... By Hihiro-san... Uuu, it’s because Mimir-chan said such weird thiiings.)

Muir’s face steamed as she became flustered. Seeing her like that, Arnold became irritated without knowing the reason and clenched his fist.

With strong resolve, the two begin taking steps toward the future. Of course, without knowing what was going on, Hihiro was traveling somewhere by himself.

And then the reunion between the two and Hihiro, which comes to be due to unbelievable circumstances, but... that is a story to be revealed in the future.

Chapter 55: That Bird, Again!

A perplexed Hiiro folded his arms.

“Ur~n⁶⁰....covering such a broad country on foot is gonna take some time. But if I try flying, I’m gonna attract attention. What should I...”

As he was contemplating, he suddenly thought of an idea. He began focusing his magic power in his fingertip.

“I doubt it will work...?”

Contrary to Hiiro’s expectations, the word was easily written and invoked.

*Pishun*⁶¹

From that location, Hiiro’s figure instantly vanished.

Hiiro appeared to be in a flower field he had seen once before. Hiiro involuntarily clenched his fists as he emitted a beaming smile.

“Oo⁶²~, it succeeded! This is great!”

Hiiro had written the word *Transfer* . As he wrote, he had an image of a certain location projected in his mind. It was a field of flowers that he had previously been in. It was called the *Doggam Garden* .

Indeed, this was the village where Hiiro had first visited ever since he had entered the Gabranth Continent. However, this village was a place that was so far from *Passion* , it would take well over 2 weeks of walking to cover the distance between them.

Which meant that what Hiiro had accomplished was instantaneous movement. If you were to put it in a more magical context, it was what is referred to as teleportation. Thinking that this would be possible with the word *Transfer* , Hiiro half-heartedly attempted to write it. Nevertheless, it seemed that Hiiro was happy to have it succeed.

Succeeding in moving between a large distance in an instant. Hiiro couldn’t help but crack a large grin.

“Yosh. With this, I can return to the Humas Continent whenever I want. This is such a cheat-like ability.”

Incidentally, the reason why Hiiro came to this village was to obtain some legs. Last time, he was able to borrow a monster called a Raidpic. Hiiro was able to travel to *Passion* while riding on its back.

As Hiiro was thinking about going to explore more of the Gabranth Continent for a little while, he returned here with the intention of borrowing a Raidpic again.

As Hiiro entered the *Doggam* village with his own feet, he began searching for a particular person.

He immediately spotted the person in question. Apparently, they seemed to be discussing something with the other villagers.

“Oi, Kuma no Ossan⁶³!”

“Ha? Eh...ah, aren’t you—!?”

The one Hihiro was addressing was Arnold’s good friend, Max. His stout physique made him resemble a pig more than a bear, or so Hihiro thought.

“It was Hihiro...right? What happened? Where’s Arnold?”

“I’m by myself. Ossan is with the Chibi in Passion at the moment.”

“He? Which means you’re all by yourself? What’d you come all the way here for?”

“I came for the Raidpic you lent me last time. I’ll pay gold. Lend it to me.”

“Aa, that guy! That reminds me that I got a report about them coming back last night.”

Hihiro thought that this was good timing. Even though a few days had passed since their parting, there was still the possibility that the Raidpic had not returned yet. Although he would have settled on other Raidpics if necessary, it was preferable to borrow one that he has already grown accustomed to.

*Dadadadadadadadadadadada*⁶⁴

Some sort of shadow began approaching with tremendous velocity. This shadow maintained this momentum as it ran up to Hihiro, hugging him while using its long tongue to lick his face.

“Kui kui kui kuuuuuu!”

“Eei⁶⁵! Cut it out! This fucking drool-bird!”

Hihiro desperately tried to tear himself away from the Raidpic. However, as he was being hugged with a considerable amount of force, it was not easy to remove himself from its grasp.

“Gahahaha! I didn’t think they’d be this attached to you! Yosha⁶⁶, I’ll lend it to ya! Actually, there’s also that! If it’s good with you, you can also buy them but it’s up to you?”

“Buy...?”

Hihiro replied with his face sticky with drool. As soon as they heard the word ‘buy’, the Raidpic froze, sending Hihiro a heated stare.

*Kirakirakirakirakirakirakira*⁶⁷

It made an expression that almost pleaded Hihiro to buy it. Its eyes were shining as if they were idol-beams⁶⁸.

(Well, it’s important that I have some ‘legs’. This guy also seems to want to be bought for some reason...)

While carefully examining the Raidpic, Hiiro gave his answer to Max.

“How much?”

With this, it turned out that Hiiro was obtaining a Raidpic. The Raidpic was so happy that it began to flap its wings that couldn’t fly with *batabata*⁶⁹, all while running around in circles.

“Eei, so annoying! If you don’t shut up, I’m gonna fry you into yakitori⁷⁰.”

“Kuii—!?”

Responding to the word ‘Yakitori’, the Raidpick froze as it shuddered with a *gatagata*. As expected, it was afraid that it would be burned. It tried to use its eyes to appeal against being burned. Thinking that this was a pain, Hiiro spoke.

“It’s a joke. We’re leaving tomorrow so make sure you rest up for today.”

“Kuii—!”

Even though it answered in the affirmative, it did not leave Hiiro’s side.

“Oi, I’m done with you so you can go back now.”

However, it did not return an answer. It sent an expectant gaze towards Hiiro, as if it was waiting for something.

“T-The hell’s its problem?”

“Aa, it wants you to give it a name.”

“Name?”

“Aa, if their new master doesn’t give them a name, these Raidpics won’t budge an inch.”

“This bird is kind of a pain in the ass.”

Exasperated, Hiiro placed his hand on his chin as he began contemplating.

“Let’s see.....isn’t ‘Bird’ fine?”

“Kui kui kui kui kui!”

*Bunbunbunbun*⁷¹ The Raidpic began to shake its head extremely violently. It seemed to be saying that it was utterly displeased with what Hiiro had just said.

“It’s quite a pampered bird.”

“Gahaha! It’s cause a name is something that represents the individual. This guy’s hoping that you’ll give it a good name.”

Hiiro stared at the Raidpic, as if analyzing it. A yellow beak and white feathers. Large dark eyes. Also, for some reason, a mark in the shape of a crescent was present on its forehead.

“What’s this mark?”

“Nn? Aa, that was there when it was born. It’s kind of like a mole if you were to compare it to a person.”

“Fur~n⁷².”

As Hiiro observed the mark, he faintly nodded.

“.....Yosh, you’re now ‘Mikazuki’.”

Hiiro simply stated thus. However...

“Kui kui kui kuuuuuuuuuuui—!”

It seemed to have taken a liking to its name as it began frolicking about. Its joy didn’t reach the level of covering Hiiro with its bodily fluids, yet, Mikazuki seemed satisfied as it returned to the bird house.

“Gahaha! Putting your naming sense aside, for a Raidpic to be that head over heels for you, as expected of someone who defeated a unique monster!”

As he chuckled heartily, Max began firmly patting Hiiro’s shoulder. As Hiiro’s face distorted due to the sudden impact, he began to speak.

“By the way, I kinda want to go to the inn, but...?”

“Oi, don’t say something so cold. Come ’ver to my place. I’ll even treat you to some Honey Sweets .”

“Hou⁷³~.”

Hiiro’s index finger⁷⁴ twitched. Today, for one night, Hiiro decided to crash at Max’s house.

As the day became the next, the sky presented itself with weather fit for a journey. Max was at the store’s exit as he was sending off Hiiro.

“So where’re you headed?”

“Who knows.”

“Have you not decided yet?”

“Aa, I’m a guy that follows wherever the wind takes me.”

“I see. Watch yourself, got it?”

“Aa, thanks for taking care of me.”

“Come again with the other two and eat some Honey Sweets .”

Max laughed with a huge grin. Hiiro answered him while on top of Mikazuki.

“Only if the chance comes.”

Thus, Hiiro departed from the village of Doggam .

“Well, for the time being let’s just look around.”

“Kuii—!”

After gaining a ‘reliable companion?’, Hihiro continued his journey. He wondered what would be his next destination. Wondering what kind of adventure it would bring, Hihiro looked forward as he carried a feeling of expectation.

“Well, go where ever you want. I’m gonna read that book I got from the Kuma no Ossan.”

It seemed that Hihiro’s forward gaze only lasted for a fraction of a second. Mikazuki almost fell to the ground in reaction to Hihiro’s attitude, yet it continued to follow its master’s orders as it began to advance appropriately.

At the Beast Kingdom Capital Passion , Leowald, the Gabranth King, had finally returned from the unexpected events that had occurred during the war. Although he was thoroughly displeased, upon learning that his daughter Mimir’s voice had returned, his attitude had completely flipped as he decided to hold a feast in celebration.

He had heard the news from the soldiers first. Of course, he was unable to believe them so he went to ask his wife Blantha, as well as the First Princess Kuclear. Hearing what Kuclear had to say, he headed straight for Mimir’s location.

Following this, as an angelic voice entered his ears, his foul mood was blown away as if it was a lie. He began screaming as he hugged his beloved daughter.

He was grateful to the Spirit that had cured Mimir’s voice. Leowald had stated to everyone that the Spirits had always been their only allies.

Following this, after toasting to the city, the feast had begun. Of course, they had also publicly announced the course of the war. Hearing that the Evila had retreated from war, there were many Gabranth who expressed anger and frustration. However, due to Mimir’s recovered voice, many had been rejoicing throughout the feast.

“Father can’t help but spoil Mimir, huh.”

As Lewald had placed Mimir on his large shoulders, he began walking around as if showing off his daughter. Overlooking this spectacle, the First Prince Leglos could only shrug his shoulders.

“Fun⁷⁵, I’m still hung up about the war, you know.”

The Second Prince Lenion began grumbling.

“No, it’s not like Father isn’t worried about the war. When it’s time to fight, we fight. When it’s time to celebrate, we celebrate. This is the law of this country. Even you’re happy about Mimir’s restored voice, right?”

“Fun, am I?”

Lenion said as he looked away. However, there was a certain softness in his expression. Even to the sloppy Lenion, Leglos had reaffirmed his thoughts that his little sister was adorable.

“It’s fine to start thinking about the war after the feast. Now is a time for celebration. Don’t you agree, Lenion?”

“.....Do whatever you want.”

The two made the glasses they both held touch the other’s before bringing it to the mouths. Everyone rejoiced as they celebrated Mimir’s voice being restored. However, in the midst of the excitement, there was one person that had their gaze transfixed on Mimir. But there was a line of sight to stare at jitter and Mimir only one person in it.

(Fumu.....why, whatever could this mean? For something that even I couldn’t cure to have...it seems that a little investigating is needed.)

As a pair of round glasses glimmered, a mouth distorted into the shape of a crescent moon.⁷⁶

Chapter 56: Movement in Victorias

A week after Hihiro set out on his journey once more, a handwritten letter from the Demon Lord arrived in the hands of Rudolf, the King of Victorias.

After scanning it with his eyes, he made a complicated face as he left it on his desk. He was in the royal office, and with him was his trusted minister, Dennis Norman.

“Now what should I do...”

“We’re already investigating the matter, but it appears that the fact the bridge was destroyed by the Demon Lord was true.”

“Yes... the Demon Lord...”

“Unlike the previous king, she is lacking in both age and ideals, I believe.”

“I’ll bet. Otherwise, she would never make an appearance like this. But still, this is...”

“Correct. With this, more animosity will be created between the Gabranth and Evila. Though if the Gabranth were to accept their treaties, it would calm down.”

“...Yeah, that’s not happening.”

“Yep, that’s impossible.”

This time, the Evila’s actions equated to trampling over the pride of the Gabranth race. For the Demon Kin, her reasons may have seemed just, but the Beastmen would simply see it as a slight against their resolve to war.

Therefore, it was currently impossible for the Gabranth to make amends with the Evila.

“I understand the Demon Lord’s goal. If this written peace treaty means just as it says, then they must be planning to ally with us to decrease the Gabranth’s motivations for war.”

“That’s plausible. But with just this treaty, we do not have definite evidence. Perhaps destroying the bridge was to get rid of an obstacle, so they could focus on destroying the Humas race. There are other possibilities.”

“...This is hard. By forming an alliance, it’s not like there are no merits for our side.”

“But you don’t wish to involve yourself in those two sides’ war...right?”

“If possible. But with this, I’ll be able to learn of the internal affairs of the Evila.”

“But that would be the same for them.”

If they do form an alliance and increase their interaction, they'd be able to get a better understanding of the other's state of affairs. It would be easier to grasp their weaknesses. But that would be true for the Evila side as well. It was both a merit and demerit.

"What sort of conditions did they propose for scheduling a meeting?"

"As written here, they give up all rights to choose and leave it all in our hands."

"My, my. Are they placing faith in us, or are they confident that they would be able to take whatever we can throw at them...?"

"Or perhaps both..."

"But if we can decide all the conditions ourselves, then if we play this well..."

"Fumu, even so, it's too early to make a decision. Even if we form an alliance in name only, there are plenty of humans who would object to it. I've also lost my daughter to them."

Rudolf's face turned bitter.

"...How are the Heroes?"

"They're growing favorably. But according to Vale, they requested that legend, Judom Lankars to be their trainer, but have yet to receive a favorable response."

"Judom..."

Rudolf closed his eyes and gave a light sigh.

"That man is hard to deal with. He seems to be under the misconception that a mere Guild Master has the same authority as a king."

Denis lets out words colored with anger.

"In emergencies he is a dependable source of offensive power, and his trust lets him command large groups. The previous King agreed to give him quite a bit of power. But he's a commoner to the end."

"Dennis, it's fine."

"...Understood."

"Even so, he's my old friend. Don't badmouth him so much."

"I apologize."

He lowered his head and apologized.

"Most likely, Judom will learn of this meeting through his expansive information network. He'll ask me to hold it without a doubt."

He had said something similar before. About how Rudolf should accept their invitations no matter how many times they were sent. He stormed on about how he would protect the King no matter what dangers

lay in wait.

“Dennis, go call Judom over.”

“...Are you sure?”

“Yeah, no matter what decision I make, I’ll need power. Isn’t that right...Dennis?”

“...Understood.”

Dennis respectfully lowered his head, and left the room.

“It’s always best to have more pieces. The four Heroes, and Judom... For that purpose, let’s delay the meeting and raise the Heroes.”

With a stern face, he gazed out of the window.

“The war ended? Who won?”

The four heroes were doing team training as they did every day. Upon receiving such words from Vale, the only male in the group, the long, brown-dyed hair ikemen, Aoyama Taishi asked as he wiped away his sweat with a towel.

“No, both sides are unharmed. It seems the Demon Lord made the war end.”

Upon hearing of how she easily decimated such a large bridge, the four heroes were slightly taken aback.

“S-So they really are that strong... the Demon Lord...”

The one speaking while turning pale was a certain Suzumiya Chika. To instantly destroy a bridge spanning 30 kilometers was a little bit much.

“The amount of magic they possess is definitely above ours. Apparently that Aquinas was there as well.”

“Ah, from that Cruel you told us about before?”

The one speaking this time was the one possessing the Kansai Accent, Akamori Shinobu.

“Yes, they are among the strongest of the demon race.”

“S-So such people exist. As I thought...”

With an anxious expression, Minamoto Shuri spoke. They thought they had become strong, but they had not the power to accomplish the feats they were hearing of. The Demon Lord who could do that in an instant must be terrifying.

“I wonder just how high its level is.”

Taishi’s questions was what everyone wanted to ask. With that strength, just how wide was the level gap between the Demon Lord and the current them. It was natural for them to be curious.

They would be fighting eventually so it was necessary information. However, Vale did not have the means to get such information.

“I don’t know their levels, but the former SSS-ranker Judom-sama fought Aquinas once, and almost died.”

“Ah, that Guild Master you’re always talking about? Last time you went to see him, he wouldn’t meet you. I wonder if he hates us.”

“No, I think the thing he hates is this country’s system in itself...probably.”

Vale gave a bitter smile as he answered. Upon seeing this, Shinobu hit him on the back.

“Well get yourself together, Vale! You can’t forget to be positive here!”

Upon seeing her give off a bright smile, he couldn’t help but feel a little better.

“Yes, that’s right! If we work hard, something will happen!”

“That’s right.”

Shuri and Shinobu smiled at each other. Continuing the previous conversation, Vale coughed for a bit, then sighed before speaking.

“At that time, I believe Judom-sama had just crossed the level 90 mark.”

“N-Ninety!?”

Taishi unintentionally cried out. Of course. They were only around half of that level at the moment. Yet such an amazing person almost died facing Aquinas...

“He’s really last-boss class...”

“And that might not even be his final form.”

Chika continued Taishi’s sentence, but Vale tilted his head, not understanding its meaning.

“C-Can we win... against such people?”

“Shuri, it’ll be fine as long as we don’t give up! And they’re not attacking us at the moment, right?”

“Yes, that seems to be the case.”

“Then until they do, we just have to frantically raise our levels! We’re aiming for the Counter Stop⁷⁷!”

Shinobu raised her fist high into the air, but as Vale had no idea what she was talking about, a question mark continued to float over his head.

“Ah, but is 99 the max?”

“No, we can’t say for sure. I mean to almost kill someone at level 90, wouldn’t they have to be over 100?”

“Hey, Vale?”

“What is it?”

“What’s the highest level?”

“I do not know. But from what I’ve heard, there are people who have crossed over level 100.”

“I see. Is there even a counter stop...?”

“Well, isn’t it fine? That means that you can get as strong as you want, right? That makes training all the more worth it!”

Taishi spoke while smiling, but Chika gave a sigh.

“Really, you sure are carefree.”

“I don’t want to be told that by you!”

“W-What!? You’re the one who’s always laid back!”

“What do you mean!?”

“Ah, yes yes yes, let’s just leave it at that. If you have time to argue, then you better get back to training.”

“T-That’s right, you two. We have to try hard as not to lose.”

Upon hearing the other two’s words, Taishi and Chika looked down and tried to make their bodies smaller.

“Haha, good teamwork. I’ll be counting on you henceforth, everyone!”

As Vale said that, everyone gave their various responses.

But he didn’t know yet. The gears of war were still moving. Battle was drawing close.

And no one knew just what that war would bring them. It was not too long before they would learn the true meaning of the war.

Chapter 57: One Month Later

“I got it!”

*Bushushushushu*⁷⁸

Hiiro stabbed a large rat with his Thorn Sword—Piercer. Blood gushed from the rat’s body as it collapsed on the ground and stopped moving. He flicked the blood off the sword before placing it in its scabbard.

“Fu~, there’re so many monsters here.”

Hiiro grumbled. One month passed since he departed from Passion. He was currently in the Glutton Forest . It was also referred to as the ‘Forest of Gluttony’. Many monsters decided to make this forest their habitat.

Just walking around for a bit would cause someone to encounter a monster. Even up till this moment, Hiiro had barely made any progress through the forest. Of course, this greatly irritated him.

If one were to look behind him, they would see a huge amount of monster corpses. Hiiro wanted to say that instead of this road being a Gabranth’s trail, it was more like a Monster’s trail. However, as Arnold, who would usually interject with his tsukommis, was not here, Hiiro felt himself grow a bit lonely.

“I’ve been camping everyday, huh? My MP recovery is quite low. If possible, I’d like to avoid using magic...”

He wanted to tear through the forest path with Word Magic , however, it wasn’t clear if a town was up ahead. There might still be a long way to go, so it was best not to use magic recklessly.

*Gusa*⁷⁹...

Hiiro drew his sword, anticipating some sort of an attack

“Kuikui kuikui.”

“Oh...it’s you.”

It was the Raidpic, Mikazuki. One month ago she (big surprise) started traveling with him. She was unable to help him fight off the monsters so Hiiro just told her to go hide somewhere whenever there was an encounter.

“Make sure you stay close.”

“Kui.”

They began advancing until Hiiro abruptly stopped.

“God, this is a gloomy forest. There is also this...”

He looked at the thing before him. To be more precise, he looked UP at the thing before him.

“Is this the boss?”

“Ku, kukukuikui!”

Mikazuki let out a surprised cry as she looked at the giant before her.

It loomed over them at a height of five meters. Not only that, but it possessed arms that were large enough to destroy trees in one sweep and muscular legs that couldn’t be damaged by flimsy attacks. It was a monster that held the ferocity of a gorilla and a bear. Fang-like teeth lined its mouth.

While observing the monster, Hiiro searched his memory, pulling up what he knew about his current foe.

“Although it’s my first time meeting one, I’m pretty sure this is an S-rank monster called a Troll.”

“Garugaaaaaaaaa!”

It was certainly making a racket. This was probably the leader of this territory, and Hiiro just intruded into it turf.

*DonDonDonDonDonDonDonDon*⁸⁰

As a warning, it began pounding on a drum. It was so loud that it hurt Hiiro’s ears.

The Troll clasped both hands together, aiming at Hiiro as it swung its arms down on him like a hammer.⁸¹

“Run away.”

“Kuiiiii!”

Following his order, Mikazuki fled and hid nearby.

“Yoto!”

Hiiro barely dodged the attack. However, it was a careless move.

*Dogooooooooo*⁸²!

The ground shattered under the Troll’s fists, causing Hiiro’s feet to become stuck in the rubble. He began to regret that he hadn’t moved further away when he was dodging.

The Troll took that chance to try and grab Hiiro. Although he was off balance, Hiiro still managed to slash at its hand. From the wound, blood began spurting out.

“Come and get me, fat ass.”

Hiiro’s words and movements angered the Troll. It threw a punch at him, yet Hiiro was already out of its range. He easily dodged the attack, however, he felt a blast of wind pressure from it.

The Troll continued to try punching Hiiro over and over again, however Hiiro dodged them expertly. Then, suddenly, it leaped into the air.

“What?”

Hiiro thought that the Troll was using its body to attack him. Hiiro planned to take advantage of that moment to drive his sword through its heart. Yet, at that moment, the Troll took out a sharp fang and tossed it at him.

”Seriously?”

Taken by surprise, Hiiro hastily guarded with his sword. In that instant—

*Dosuuuuuuuuun*⁸³

The ground shook as if a small earthquake had just occurred. The Troll, thinking that it was over, slowly stood up and walked towards the area to confirm his victory.

However, when he got there, the wounded body of Hiiro was not what had appeared. It glared forward with bloodshot eyes and was enraged when Hiiro appeared unscathed before him.

“To make me use Word Magic , as expected of an S-rank monster.”

Looking closely, the word Speed had been written on his right hand. Using that word, he was able to accelerate his body and move away at the moment of impact.

“As I thought, it was a good idea to prepare this beforehand.”

Seeing Hiiro’s smirk, the Troll became even more furious as it uprooted a tree and began to swing it at Hiiro.

“Hey! What do you think you’re swinging around?”

Hiiro knew that if he took a direct hit from that, it wouldn’t be good. He tried to create some distance, however, it was moving too fast.

“This bastard!”

Reluctantly, Hiiro stopped moving and ducked. Taking this opportunity the Troll used both hands to smash the tree above Hiiro’s head.

*Dogaaaaaaaan*⁸⁴!

The Troll, thinking it had succeeded this time, grinned.

“Guki...ga....!?”

Hiiro, skillfully dodging the tree, drove the sword into its neck from the left.

“I’m not done yet!”

Hiiro pulled his sword from the throat, slipped into the Troll’s chest and stabbed its heart. Following this

series of attacks, he created distance between himself and the Troll.

He distanced himself to avoid any of the Troll’s wild, unexpected movements. The Troll thrashed around for a while before its movements became sluggish. It spasmed one more time before becoming completely still.

A level up tone rang in Hihiro’s head. His level had went up significantly in the last month, yet, consistently leveling up was something to be appreciated.

HIIRO OKAMURA		Lv. 68	
HP:	578/1400	ATK:	426 488
MP:	1870/2340	DEF:	340 355
		AGL:	546 548
EXP:	364852	HIT:	304 312
NEXT:	15500	INT:	477 481
Magic Attribute None			
Magic Word Magic Single Chain Unlocked, Air Writing Unlocked, Parallel Writing Unlocked, Double Chain Unlocked, Simultaneous Invocation Unlocked, Invocation Management Unlocked			
Titles Innocent Bystander, Other Worlder, Word Master, Awakened One, Ripper, One Who Imagines, Killer of the Unique, Gourmet Bastard, One Who Follows His Own Path, Friend of the Fairies, Mikazuki’s Owner, Monster Slayer, Wanderer			

Name: Hihiro Okamura		Rank: S	
Sex: Male	Equipment		
Age: 17	■ Weapon: Piercer		
Race: Human	■ Guard: Red Robe		
From: Unknown	■ Accessory: Fairy Ring		
Quest:		Rigin: 7,854,000	

When he reached level 50, he unlocked the skill Simultaneous Invocation . At level 60, he got Invocation Management .

Simultaneous Invocation MP Cost: 30
Before, when writing a new word, the previous word’s effect would be erased. With this skill, this limitation has been removed. The user is now able write other words simultaneously, however, you can only activate words one at a time, thus, you still need to exercise caution. Also, activating the same word will still trigger a synergistic effect as shown with the skill Parallel Writing.

--

Invocation Management MP cost: 250

It is now possible to manipulate the invocation of a maximum of 5 words. It is possible to activate a previously written word at any given time. However, this skill can only be applied to the Single Chain skill. In addition, the user must be within 300 meters of the words written before they could be triggered.

While reading the description didn't help at first, after applying the skills, he was able to comprehend their functionality. There could not be skills any more useful than these.

The first skill was Simultaneous Invocation . Before if he invoked the word Protect , there would be a wall of magic to protect him for one minute. However, if he wrote a different word before the duration time elapsed, the effect of Protect would wear off straight away, overwritten by the new character

However, with Simultaneous Invocation , when the word Protect was used, the Protect word's effect will remain in place and the word Thunder could be used to assault the enemy, or the word Fly could be used at the same time to fly away.

However, the restriction was that only one-word skills could be activated. Two-word skills could not be invoked. Similarly, if Hiiro were to activate a two-word character while the one-word spell was still active, the effect of the one-word character would immediately dissipate.

Nonetheless, it was a very versatile skill. He would be able to use the word Protect while he prepared his two-word spell. Furthermore, he could increase the effect of Speed by writing another Speed right away.

If he didn't use the word he wrote, he needed to be mindful of the increasing MP costs. The first Simultaneous Word would cost 30 MP, the second would cost 60 MP and the third would cost 90 MP, and so on and so forth depending on how many words he wanted.

The second skill was Invocation Management . Before, when he used Word Magic , he would write out a word in thin air and it would remain there, disappearing only if it was left alone for a long period of time or if it was activated. With this skill, if he wrote with the Invocation Management skill, he would write the word as usual, but the word would disappear and remain at that location. This meant that it would be invisible to other people

As long as he was within a 300-meter radius, he can locate and activate those words at will.

Not only could this be used as a potential trap, he could also activate all five words at the same time for a full frontal assault. Its only limitation was that it could only be used with one-word spells. This was definitely a cheat. Incidentally, writing a two-word spell would cause any planted one-word spells to disappear.

He also needed to take extra precaution if he moved outside the range of the words. Should he go out of range, the words set would disappear. It was a little disappointing that only one-word spells could be used. This skill would prove much more versatile if it accommodated the use of two-word characters.

Also, the word Speed he had used earlier was triggered instantly because he set it up using the

Invocation Management skill. Thus, this ability could be used to prepare words on the body, equipment and weaponry, which could all be activated at will.

During the month that had passed, Hihiro practiced using his Word Magic . Specifically, he was experimenting with the Rebound penalty incurred when he was disrupted while using the Double Chain skill.

The description he received was proven correct. For six hours, he was unable to use Word Magic and all his stats were halved. This was a significant penalty. If he had incurred this penalty in the middle of battle, he would be crippled and would have a high chance of getting himself killed.

For example, if he incurred the penalty while fighting the Troll, it would be have been difficult to run, let alone fight when his stats were halved and his Word Magic sealed. He would most likely be killed if he made a single wrong move.

Although Word Magic was like a cheat, if a mistake was made, the user would suffer a harsh Rebound penalty. Thus, he had to be very cautious when using it.

“Either way, I have to get out of this forest and find a village!”

He had encountered several monsters along the way, but none of them were as strong as the Troll he faced. After a short while, he finally reached the forest exit.

“It is finally over. Now...”

Hihiro stepped out of the forest and looked around, however, he could only see small hills in the distance.

“I guess I have no choice. I don’t want to use too much MP.”

He wanted to find the nearest town as soon as possible so he wrote and activated the word Search . Immediately, a pale arrow appeared before him, pointing east. Apparently, there was something east of here.

“Alright! Lets go, Mikazuki.”

“Kui!”

Hihiro jumped on Mikazuki’s back and they started moving. He had a lot of MP left over, but his regeneration was still slow. There was no more point in staying in this demon-infested area.

“Even if a demon appears, keep running.”

Hihiro then wrote the word Speed on Mikazuki.

“Kuikuikuiiiii!”

In that instant, a burst of energy surged through her body, her movement speed increased significantly. Looking around him atop of Mikazuki’s back, Hihiro was able to see a few demons. However, at this velocity he was confident that he would be able to run away without any issues.

They ran up and down a hill before, eventually, he was able to see a townscape up ahead.

Although the word magic’s effect was still active, Hiiro deemed it no longer necessary and deactivated it.

“Come on, forward!”

“Kuiiiii!”

Chapter 58: Now, to the Evila Continent!

[Author's Note: It's finally time for the Evila Continent Arc~]

As Hiiro had arrived in the town of Kalent, he parked Mikazuki close near the inn before immediately searching for a general store. Of course, he was looking to buy some MP recovery items.

Incidentally, Hiiro had attempted to write the word Recovery, thinking that it might possibly recover his MP. Needless to say, the attempt did not go very well. Although his HP was restored, his MP would only drop, stubbornly refusing to recover. Hiiro thought it would be nice if it was possible, however, he didn't expect his power to be so broken as to allow such a cheat.

Following this, he attempted to increase his stock of recovery items using Replication and Division. When he took those items, his MP certainly did increase. Yet, after a minute had passed, the effects of his magic faded along with the corresponding amount of MP restored.

Thinking that the temporary increase in MP was good, however, Hiiro tried to use magic after he took some of the replicated restoration items when his MP was near 0. Needless to say, he was able to use the MP. However, after a minute had passed, Hiiro had noticed a drastic decrease of his physical condition. As he checked his Status, he was faced with a horrid sight. His previously full HP had dropped to a measly 1%.

Hiiro determined that this was probably the effect of a Rebound caused by trying to forcefully use magic when he had no MP. However, as it had been demonstrated that he could cut off his health in exchange for the use of magic, Hiiro decided to resort to this as a trump card. As it was frightening considering what would have happened if he had used magic twice, he placed a rule constraining himself to only using magic once when using HP as fuel.

In the meantime, Hiiro decided that he would spend today packing his bag with recovery agents as food would be purchased tomorrow. He stared at the direction of the inn he was staying at, the place that he would be leaving tomorrow.

“Well then, I guess I'll buy Mikazuki's food before heading back.”

As a side note, Mikazuki's favorite food was called the Puryun Fruit, a fruit that looked like an actual pudding. Although it wasn't as soft as a pudding, it held a taste unique to fruit, inducing a sweet and sour flavor which would make one reminiscent of a strawberry.

As Hiiro began walking towards the inn, he spotted a building that suddenly caught his attention.

“Is that...a library?”

Hiiro's eyes began shining with a *kirakira*. His feet carried him towards the library as if it was a law of nature. As he opened the door and entered, he discovered that while the space wasn't large, the place was without a doubt, a library.

“.....He~, I wonder if this place has a lending and purchasing area.”

There were two counters, one to the left and one to the right. Both had a sign propped up in front of them, one reading ‘Lending’, the other ‘Purchase’.

The counter installed on the right had books available for lending only, while the one set up on the left seemed to have books that could be bought.

Hiiro unhesitatingly moved towards the purchasing area. While Hiiro wouldn't have any issues about borrowing books if he was planning on staying long-term, as he was leaving tomorrow, he immediately sought to buy some books for the road.

“.....Nn?”

As he was walking, Hiiro glanced at a certain title as he began to focus on a particular book. As he wanted to view the cover, he took the book from the shelf.

“As I thought.”

Hiiro looked at the book, slightly nodding to himself as he had confirmed his suspicions.

(*The Adventures of Tyn Cal Weikl*while the color of the cover's different than the one I saw before, it looks like its contents are the same. The author's name also matches.)

Hiiro recalled one of the books that he had borrowed from Max in *Doggam* . At that time, the cover was tinted livid, however, the title, contents and author had matched the book that Hiiro currently held in his hands. He observed that, unlike other books, this one was apparently unpopular as there were 5 other copies lying around.

(*Well, this is a Humas story. It probably just had poor reception among the Gabranth.*)

As he thought this, Hiiro returned to the shelves as he planned to buy any books that seemed noteworthy.

After returning to the inn, he fed Mikazuki before heading to his room. He collapsed onto the bed as he heaved a large sigh.

“Looks like I'm heading over there tomorrow. About time.”

As he thought this, Hiiro closed his eyes.

The next day, Hiiro, who had left Kalent , had stopped after walking for a short while.

“Yosh, this should be far enough.”

“Kui!”

Hiiro poured magic power into his fingertip as he began writing. What he had written was the word Transfer . He was trying to teleport to a certain location.

“Shall we go?”

“Kui!”

Hiiro touched Mikazuki with empty hands as he invoked the word.

Pishun

The two’s figures instantly disappeared.

A vast sea of blue spread itself before Hiiro upon his arrival. However, as the ground that Hiiro was standing on had become the edge of a cliff, the shape he was overseeing was the ocean. Looking further ahead was a continent so huge, it appeared as if it was covering the sea.

“It hasn’t changed from before, huh.”

In actuality, Hiiro had visited this place before. As soon as he had parted from Arnold and company, he came here. At that time, since the war had just ended, the place was littered with Gabranth. Hiiro had determined that they were soldiers based on their attire.

There were several reasons for Hiiro’s visit to this location. It was the place where the distance between the two continents was at its smallest. He had wanted to see the place where the Gabranth had wanted to go to war with his own eyes. Also, he needed to visit this area once for a certain, specific purpose.

The Gedult Bridge Site . Previously, there had been a huge bridge built here.

It was the one and only bridge that connected the Evila and Gabranth Continents together. About one month ago, it had existed here. However, the Demon Lord literally wiped it off the map. However, as of now, it was no longer here. All that could be seen was the great, expansive ocean.

Hiiro, after surveying his surroundings, confirmed that no one was present and began to write a word. However, this time, he began to write on himself.

As he invoked it, Hiiro’s kemonomimi and tail began to fade away. In place of this, his ears began to grow pointed and a small horn grew from his forehead. His undeniably pale skin also changed, growing even paler as it began to appear discolored. Furthermore, his silver hair darkened as it turned into a thin shade of purple.

“Yosh, it looks like it succeeded.”

Noticing his skin tone change, Hiiro alone nodded. What Hiiro had written was the word

Change ⁸⁵. Initially, upon his arrival to this continent, Hiiro realized that having a Humas

appearance would be unfavorable, disguising himself to look like a Gabranth. As such, this time...

“No matter what angle you look at this, doesn’t this look an Evila ?”

Indeed, Hiiro’s purpose for coming here was so that he could travel to the Evila Continent that he could see off in the distance. In the past month, he had searched for and found a book about the Evila , learning about all their different races and their appearances.

The Evila appearance he had taken on seemed to be the form belonging to a common race that was bountiful in number. As he had an ‘image’ of them, he was able to disguise himself.

“Kui kui!”

Mikazuki returned Hiiro’s question with a nod as she swung her head up and down with a *kokukoku*⁸⁶. Seeing this, Hiiro climbed on Mikazuki as he began to write the word Flight on its back.

As Mikazuki felt power swelling up inside of her, her body began convulsing with a *buruburu*⁸⁷.

“Yosh, let’s move!”

“Kuiiiii—!”

Responding to Hiiro’s voice, Mikazuki spread her wings wide.

*Basabasa*⁸⁸

As she moved her large wings, Mikazuki’s body loftily ascended. Should any outsiders witness this spectacle, they would surely be surprised.

Raidpics were inherently incapable of flight due to a defect in their wings. And yet, were it perhaps made known that one could fly, it would probably attract attention.

However, as a result of Hiiro’s investigation, it seemed that Raidpics that could fly like Mikazuki were present within the Evila Continent . It appeared that depending on the environment, different parts of the Raipic evolved and/or degenerated.

It seemed that Raidpics like Mikazuki, who were born in the Gabranth Continent , have had their leg strength abnormally developed as they could run for long periods of time while maintaining a considerable speed.

Those who were born in the Evila Continent seemed to have been spared from their wings degenerating, as they were capable of flying around freely in the sky. Therefore, even if they were spotted flying around, Hiiro determined that they would be dismissed as a common sight, thus, he chose this method.

Hiiro and Mikazuki began rising up toward the sky. Hiiro began overlooking the Gabranth Continent from the sky.

“It was an interesting country, but perhaps another time.”

As he muttered, Hiiro brought his gaze forward, staring at the Evila Continent . As the smell of a new

adventure drifted towards his nose, Hiiro couldn't help but grin.

Mikazuki advanced through the sky with substantial velocity. Although a Raidpic could not fly originally, thanks to Hiiro's magic, she was able to soar through the skies. This made Mikazuki very happy as a pleasant feeling spread through her. With her master⁸⁹ on her back, being able to take to the skies made Mikazuki overjoyed.

She was truly glad that she had met her master, Hiiro. Although his mouth and attitude were awful, Mikazuki felt that she would be able to experience fun and thrilling things that one would not normally be able to. She thought that no matter where or how far they traveled, she would like to remain carrying Hiiro on his journey.

“Oi, if you don't watch it, you'll wear yourself out, you know?”

Even though Mikazuki could fly with Hiiro's word `Flight`, they had already conducted an experiment that proved that they could move faster by flapping her wings. However, this would end up being very exhausting.

However, Mikazuki replied to Hiiro's words with cries that were constantly saying 'I'm fine'.

(Well, even if I don't worry about it, we'll arrive quickly at this pace...)

As he contemplated, Hiiro stared at the steadily approaching `Evila Continent`. If anything, the landscape was as naturally formed as the `Gabranth Continent`.

He confirmed that vast forests and lakes were spread across the land. However, Hiiro noticed that the forests and lakes took upon strange hues.

Crimson lakes and obsidian forests. Although a strange sight, a desert could also be found further away. However, unlike the `Gabranth` or `Humas` continents, there were barely any signs of buildings. The lack of them was so significant, it made one wonder whether they had any towns or villages.

As several mountains were blocking his view, Hiiro couldn't help but tilt his neck, wondering if there were any towns beyond them.

While thinking that he should prioritize gathering information, Hiiro began searching for a town or village. However, after restlessly surveying the landscape, he was unable to find one.

(Now what.....should I just keep flying around while sight seeing? No, this guy doesn't have an infinite source of strength and energy. I guess it can't be helped. Let's stop off somewhere nearby and then use the word `Search`.)

Thinking so, Hiiro indicated to Mikazuki that they would stop at a coast nearby.

Chapter 59: The Threat of the Grand Slime!

When Hiiro landed on the coast, Mikazuki collapsed on the ground in exhaustion. Apparently, it was caused by the fact that she just flew across such a long distance for the first time. Not sure what could happen next, Hiiro wrote the word `Restore` on her body, restoring her stamina.

Hiiro, still having a high tension due to arriving on a new continent, began running around the beach shouting. After doing so to his heart's content, Hiiro used the word `Search` to look for the nearest village.

The moment he activated the word, an arrow appeared before him, pointing in the direction of the nearest village.

“There should be a village up ahead, huh.”

The arrow that had appeared was pointing towards the mountains up ahead.

“Is the village hidden in the hill, or is it beyond the mountains? Either way, I need to be as careful as possible.”

“Kui!”

Mikazuki nodded and shook her back, telling Hiiro to get on. Hiiro ran beside Mikazuki for a moment before hopping onto her back and heading in the direction of the arrow.

After leaving the beach, Hiiro saw a vast grassland spread before him. Beyond the grassland was the hill and mountain range that he witnessed before.

(It feels calm right now, but I'll never know when something might happen.)

From what he read about the `Evila` Continent, the monsters in this area were numerous and more formidable when compared to the other continents. He didn't feel that monsters would openly come out and attack, however, as he could be attacked anytime, he decided to prepare some words in anticipation.

Using `Simultaneous Invocation`, he was now able to set up five words at a time. He wrote the words `Speed` and `Protect` on himself and Mikazuki. He also wrote the word `Extend` on his sword. The words faded into the objects. With his preparations complete, he would now be able to activate any of these words at will.

And yet, if he used a two-word spell, all the one-word spells he had set up at that moment would disappear. Thus, he need to be careful to avoid using two-word spells.

“If I level up, I might be able to do more than this. However, I better watch myself for now.”

The idea of being able to use two words with his current abilities made him excited. He was determined

to continue hunting monsters to raise his level.

While he was casually riding Mikazuki, he saw something move at the edge of his vision.

“Stop!”

“Kui!?”

Mikazuki skidded to a halt.

“Kui?”

“Look over there.”

Hihiro pointed at a monster before him.

It was a slime that was 10 times larger than normal slimes. As it moved around on the ground, it kept making a *punipuni* sound. Its body was green, however it was transparent, to the extent of being able to see the other side of its body. Near the center of the body, there was red mass.

“Could that red, heart-like thing in the center be its weak point? My first opponent is a monster that isn’t in the illustrated book huh...”

Hihiro was surprised because this was a demon that he didn’t know anything about. He thought it was a unique monster, but he had also seen something similar a while back. Unlike the unique monsters, that generally wandered around alone, these monsters looked as if they were working together.

“Just as I heard, the demons of the Evila Continent weren’t listed in the encyclopedia.”

The encyclopaedia that he had read only listed the monsters in the Humas Continent and the Gabranth Continent. It didn’t look like it listed any monsters on the Evila Continent.

“I want to find a reference book for this area as soon as possible.”

If he didn’t do something like that, he would be significantly disadvantaged when fighting the monsters in the Evila continent. He would definitely be more prepared if he knew about the monsters he was facing beforehand. Of course, he could use word magic to find out about the monsters, however, doing so would not be an efficient use of MP.

Thus, it would be much more efficient if he could find a reference book.

“That is true, but first off, let’s see what the first fight on the Evila Continent will be like.”

Hihiro got off of Mikazuki’s back and drew out Thorn-Piercer.

“You, stay back.”

“Kui!”

It was familiar exchange. Following Hihiro’s order, Mikazuki fled the battlefield immediately.

“First off, let’s try and look into something.”

As the slime still didn't notice Hihiro, he used this opportunity to write the word **Pry** in order to view the monster's **Status** .

“Let's see...its name is Grand Slime, Rank S. Seriously!? There are several S-ranked monsters crawling around here!?”

He looked around, noting that there were several other Grand Slimes nearby. He had met S-ranked monsters before, but they were generally considered unique and they were always by themselves. However, as expected, in the Evila continent there were a lot of S-ranked monsters wandering around.

(If a rank SS or a rank SSS monster came out...)

In the past month, Hihiro had fought with an SS-rank monster on the Gabranth continent. Its strength and power were in orders of magnitude stronger than anything he had encountered thus far. He had barely managed to defeat it by making full use of his **Word Magic** . If he had made a single blunder during that encounter, he would undoubtedly have perished.

At that moment, he felt that he was dancing on a thin line between life and death.

He didn't want to face another SS-rank monster. As his affinity with the type of monster and topology had worked in his favor, he was able to somehow win thanks to good luck. He knew that it was way too soon for him to face an SS-rank monster. If he didn't level up significantly, then he would definitely die the next time.

(Ever since then, I haven't wished for Arnold and Muir's presence more strongly.)

Although he didn't show it, when he was working together with Arnold and Muir, they were very helpful. If they were with him when he was facing that SS Rank monster, the battle would not have been so dangerous.

And yet, from now on, he was all alone. Furthermore, the monsters on the **Evila** Continent would be much stronger than those he encountered before. If his level was low, he could be killed off pretty easily.

(Taking all that into account, I have no choice but to raise my level as quickly as possible.)

He had a strong premonition that he would eventually be fighting monsters that would be of a higher rank than SS in the future.

“For that purpose, these guys will be my food.”

Sensing bloodlust, the Slime stopped and slowly turned to face him. Following this, it leapt at Hihiro with an unexpected velocity.

“Fast!”

Even though it had such a large body mass, it moved with the speed of a small animal. It was full of openings so Hihiro took this chance to jump past the Grand Slime and slice it with his sword.

Zuba⁹⁰

He thought he inflicted a significant blow to the slime, yet it was unfazed by it.

“Crap? It didn’t hit?”

Hiiro wanted to avoid physical contact with it. However, a bullet-like object suddenly detached itself from the slime’s body and flew towards him. Using both hands, Hiiro braced for impact. However, it was so soft that there was no impact or damage at all.

(What’s going on?)

He raised his eyebrow, wondering what had just occurred. However, something happened in the following moment.

Boutsu⁹¹!

The part of Hiiro that was hit with the Slime abruptly burst into flames.

“Hot!”

He tried to put out the fire by waving it in the air, but nothing happened.

“Damn!”

He squatted on the ground and pressed the burning part into the soil. At that moment, the fire went out.

“Hah, hah, hah...this bastard.”

Not only did Hiiro suffer some burns, his red robe was scorched, left in tatters by the flames. He began to regret that he hadn’t used the word *Protect* .

“Damn...this can’t be easily restored either.”

He drew his sword and slashed at the Slime again. He once again felt the weapon land a solid strike on the monster. Yet, similar to before, it had no effect. Looking closely, he noticed that the parts he had damaged had already been regenerated.

“I see. Physical attacks don’t work on this thing. Now what.....”

Chapter 60: Resurrecting Butler?

Hiiro slowly understood the characteristics of the Grand Slime.

(Hm, if I used the word Analyze, I would probably be able to find out everything about it. However, if I did, all the other words that I set up would disappear.)

The limitations of the two-word ability irritated him, yet he felt that it would be interesting to analyze his opponent with his own abilities. He would also be able to find out what he was currently capable of.

(To start with, it seems that normal attacks have no effect. I'll have to...)

Hiiro distanced himself from the slime and prepared a finger to write a word. The slime reacted by shooting another green ball of slime at him. Hiiro knew that blocking it was pointless so he skillfully dodged it.

The ball splattered on the ground and burst into flames. Looking at the fire, Hiiro judged that the word Fire would be ineffective against the slime. It was also clear that it wasn't a good idea to approach it more than necessary.

If the slime ignited its large body, he wouldn't be able to escape with just small burns if he got close. Thus, it was decided that attacking from a distance was a good idea.

(As expected of an S-rank, it has some troublesome abilities.)

Not only was it fast, but it could split parts of its body to attack mid-range targets. This made it dangerous and difficult to approach. Without a doubt, this troublesome monster was an S-rank.

(So what should I do? I'm sure that core-like part in its body is the weak point. Should I pierce through it with my sword? But its movements are so quick. Not to mention, if that thing explodes after stabbing it, things would turn very dangerous...)

Considering all of the above, he came up with a plan. First, he would attack from afar, sheath his sword and write something on the the slime to deal with its movement speed. As he had prepared the word, the Search effect dissipated.

He decided that he would use the word Ice to stop the monster's movement and then finish it off with his sword. However, just as he was preparing the word, something flew at him from behind. Luckily, it barely missed him as the object splattered on to the ground and burst into flames.

He sharply turned his head. As he had thought, there was another Grand Slime. It had probably noticed the commotion and decided to join the fray.

For Hiiro this was inconvenient. He wanted to face only one at a time. Honestly, it would be quite difficult for him to face two S-rank monsters at the same time.

Hiiro shook his head in exasperation, distancing himself so that he could see his enemies. However, both monsters immediately closed in.

“Damn, they’re persistent!”

He managed to create some distance between them, however, projectiles flew from their bodies as Hiiro desperately dodged them.

The situation began to grow increasingly annoying. As a blue vein of anger appeared on Hiiro’s forehead, he clicked his tongue.

“Stop screwing with me, you puni-bastards!”

At that moment Hiiro activated a word, instantly vanishing from his location. What Hiiro had activated was the word *Speed* . As it had been set up before, it took effect immediately.

Hiiro appeared behind one of the Grand Slimes and quickly wrote the word *Ice* . In an instant, ice spread from the location of the word and froze the Grand Slime. However, the other Grand Slime charged toward him from behind.

“I know you were going to do that!”

At that moment, Hiiro activated the word *Protect* .

*Biiinnn*⁹²

An invisible wall of magic shrouded Hiiro, and with a bang, the charging Grand Slime was deflected and stunned.

At about the same time, Hiiro drew his sword and activated the word *Extend* .

*Zushin*⁹³!

The blade extended as it stabbed through the Grand Slime’s body. It skillfully pierced its red core as well.

The Grand Slime stopped moving.

“That must have been its weak point.... right?”

But...

*Dokun!*⁹⁴

The moment the sword went through the heart, he felt a pulsing vibration on from the sword.

(Something bad?)

Hiiro instantly leaped away from his current position.

*Bobobob bobobuuuu*⁹⁵!

The moment the sword pierced its core, the body started burning and spluttering intensely. If Hiiro hadn’t

moved away in time, he would have been caught up in the spectacle before him.

As it continued to burn away, it left a black scorch mark on the ground. He was relieved that it didn't explode as he had only instinctively moved far enough to avoid the sputtering flames.

Hiiro looked back at the frozen Grand Slime. He knew that if he didn't defeat the other one within one minute, it would defrost and start moving again.

"Let's defeat this one like before."

Hiiro rushed at the frozen slime and stabbed the extended Thorn-Piercer at the core of the Grand Slime before quickly stepping away

As expected, the Grand Slime burst into flames, setting everything nearby on fire, including the ice that it was encased in.

Hearing the level up tone ring, Hiiro checked his status. He had increased to level 69. It was satisfying. He wrote the word `Origin` on the sword and returned it to its original length.

"Phew, that was pretty bothersome"

When Mikazuki thought the battle was over, she walked toward Hiiro with an anxious expression on her face. Hiiro gently patted her beak and said.

"Don't worry, I won't lose in this kind of place."

"Kuii..."

Even after hearing those words, Mikazuki still had an anxious expression on her face. She was reminded of when he fought with an SS-ranked monster. It was very dangerous at that time. Her owner was in tatters and extremely close to being dead. He had barely survived.

When she remembered what had happened at that time, she became anxious as she saw him fighting those slimes. The part of her that felt she wasn't of any help to her owner began to grow.

"Well, let's continue."

Even then, she looked at the Hiiro who was in front of her. She didn't know if he understood her feelings. However, even if he did, he wouldn't stop moving forward. Seeing such a straightforward master, Mikazuki had no choice but to let out a sigh and keep going.

Hiiro progressed straight toward his destination, fighting and defeating monsters to raise his level.

After walking through the plains for some time, the distant hill appeared to be a lot closer than before.

On his way there, he had fought with numerous monsters. The monsters of the Evlia continent were of a high quality. Most of them had a rank above A.

Because of that, he quickly leveled up. When his level hit 70, he thought he would get a new skill or an ability that he had that would improve. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

Instead he got the title [Lightning Quick](#)⁹⁶ and [Wise Man](#)⁹⁷. Viewing the description for the [Lightning Quick](#) title, he found that it was a title given to a person who had diligently raised their level several times within a short period. It seemed to amplify the rate of acquisition of experience as well as the amount.

The [Wise Man](#) title seemed to be awarded to magic users who reached level 70. It was a title that increased the base MP value, something that Hihiro was grateful for.

As Hihiro had really wanted to learn a new [Word Magic](#) skill, he fought and defeated every monster he had encountered. If he leveled up to this extent, he might not have to use [Word Magic](#) to defeat Rank A monsters.

Regardless, it seemed that he had no choice but to use magic when faced with S-ranked monsters.

As he made full use of his sword and magic, Hihiro and Mikazuki finally arrived at the foot of the mountain. However, they stopped abruptly.

The reason for this was because in front of him, a collapsed person had his face planted into the ground. The way that he collapsed didn't look like he was going to sleep.

“..Is he dead?”

He slowly approached the person while riding on top of Mikazuki.

“Roll him over.”

“Kuii.”

Mikazuki followed Hihiro's instruction and turned the body over. She placed her feet under the body, and using some strength, flipped the body over. The man had white hair that was swept all the way back.

He also had a well-formed mustache. Looking at his face, Hihiro could feel that this person was of considerable age. In terms of human years, he would be about 50 years old.

However, his mouth was wide open and the white of his eyes was all that could be seen. The person seemed to be breathing, yet, why he had fallen in this place was a complete mystery.

The greatest mystery of all was that he was also wearing a remarkable tailcoat, making him look like a butler from a manga or anime.

“This old guy, is he a butler hired by a rich person or something?”

Either way, as it had nothing to do with him, he simply left it where it was and continued.

*Kuwa*⁹⁸!

The eyes that were white before, flashed with a light for a moment before he began muttering a repeated word.

“Mumumu!”

Following this, he leaped into the air as he spoke the word “Tou!”, and spun his body around several times in the air

*Stashi*⁹⁹!

He landed admirably on his feet. He bent his back and bowed to Hihiro.

*Dogon*¹⁰⁰!

He fell back on the ground in that position, as if he were a marionette who had its strings suddenly cut.

(This old man...what the hell does he want...?)

Chapter 61: The Insightful Butler Silva

Both Mikazuki and Hihiro's jaws dropped in surprise when faced with the eccentric old man.

"Megu...."

"Huh?"

Having heard something, Hihiro brought his ear closer to the old man. The old man reacted by raising a trembling hand.

"Ple.....please....food..."

Still unable to comprehend what the person was saying, Hihiro frowned with suspicion.

GugyururururuU~

A very loud rumbling came from the person's stomach as he grabbed his stomach in agony. Apparently, it seemed that he was just hungry.

However, even when faced with such a spectacle, Hihiro was undoubtedly Hihiro. Once he had understood the reason for the old man's collapse, he wore an apprehensive expression that told Mikazuki 'We're leaving' as he began to walk away.

Although Mikazuki's expression asked 'Is this okay?'

"There is no reason to help him."

Hihiro flatly stated. As her master seemed to have decided thus, Mikazuki moved her feet and followed behind Hihiro.

"Please...please..."

Hihiro ignored his voice and mounted Mikazuki. As the voice continued to ceaselessly cry as if it were a stomach worm, Mikazuki reluctantly walked passed the old man.

"Th...this..."

Hearing the elderly man summon up his voice, Hihiro raised his eyebrows, widening his eyes in curiosity. Moving only his eyes, he saw the old man holding up a book that seemed slightly larger than a paperback book.

"Ri...right now...I only have...but this...very valuable..."

Hihiro faced the old man, his gaze locked on to the book. It seemed that the old man wanted to negotiate by trading the book for food. Hihiro opened his mouth and spoke.

“What kind of book is it?”

Hearing Hiiro’s voice, the old man desperately raised his head, making a thumbs up as he spoke with a beaming smile.

“E...Erotic book!”

“As if those books can exist!”

Hiiro unintentionally threw the book in his hand.

*Bahin*¹⁰¹!

The book flew right between the old man’s face knocking him unconscious.

“Ah, crap.”

Hiiro thought that he accidentally dealt the final blow as he approached the man in pity. Mikazuki also looked at Hiiro, its eyes saying that that was overkill.

“Kuikuiki.”

‘You could have at least given him some food’ was what she wanted to say. Even without an interpreter, this message was easily understood.

“You know, I have no obligation to help this old man. Also, is there any point in sharing our limited supply of food with a hentai like this guy?”

Hiiro desperately began to think that he did not want to associate himself with a hentai that would trade food for a erotic book.

“H...how about...this.”

The Old man revived once again as he took out another book. As it was the same size as the previous book, Hiiro was wary.

“This book...is written by...Mr. Marquis Bluenote’s...”

Upon hearing that name, Hiiro narrowed his eyes as he looked at the book “Marquis Bluenote...”

It was a name he heard before. From what he could remember, it was the author of a heroic tragedy called The Adventures of Tyn Cal Weikle ¹⁰². He doubted the same author would write an erotic book.

“Alright... I’ll give you food in exchange for that book. But I won’t forgive you if there’s any weird content in that book. Got it?”

“T...thank...you.”

At that moment, the old man collapsed in exhaustion.

*“Mogu mogu! Gokunshi! Hamu! Musha Musha! Gogu gogu gogu! Psha!”*¹⁰³

The moment the old man woke up, Hiiro divided the food he prepared for the journey. The old man ate the food like a tiger who had just found its prey. The food flowed into the old man’s stomach at a tremendous speed.

Hiiro and Mikazuki watched with dumbfounded expressions. The old man ignored them as he continued eating.

The old man then cleaned his teeth with a toothpick, wiped his mouth with a handkerchief, groomed his hair with a comb and then bowed, his head plastered to the ground. Whether it was the fault of the butler clothes, Hiiro couldn’t tell, but he felt that the gesture strangely suited the old man.

“For the act of saving my life today, I am very grateful to you. I am addressed by the name Silva. I am truly pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“A-Aah.”

“Kui...”

In response to the old man’s strange gesture, the two returned their answers in a state of surprise.

“Nofofofo! Ah, I’m sorry for laughing. I thought that it was the end of me until you guys had arrived by chance. Because of that, I was saved. How lucky I was to meet you!”

His eyes shined in gratitude as he spoke aloud.

“What a great day! I thought I was going to die, yet, I am alive! This must be the will of the heavens! And this encounter must be heaven-sent. Please let me know your name.”

Hiiro made an unpleasant face. Seeing that face, the butler felt Hiiro’s discontent as he took a step back and bowed apologetically.

“That was rude of me, to displease my benefactor. However, if it is possible, would you please tell me your name?”

It was a question that was inevitable, but Hiiro prepared an answer to escape from this moment.

“T-Tarou Tanaka.”

He used a false name. He thought that there was no problem using a false name as their relationship would only go this far. However...

“Mumumu!”

The old man coughed as he looked at Hiiro with partially observant eyes.

“That is a fake name, is it not?”

There was bright gleam in Silva’s eyes as Hiiro was quickly exposed.

“...Based on what evidence?”

Hiiro said with a calm expression. Silva placed a hand on his chest as he lowered his head.

“Even though I look this way, I have been a Butler for a long time.”

Hiiro wanted to say ‘I know you’re a butler because you look like that’, but he just glared at him silently.

“As such, it is necessary for a Butler to be competent in several fields. It is necessary for a Butler to be able to carry out anything the master orders. And among them, the most important skill for a Butler to have is to be able to read people.”

“...What do you mean?”

“As people may desire a lord’s authority and status, they will use many underhanded methods to do so. It goes without saying that these people come in large quantities. In particular, there are those that weave lies, deceiving many with expertly constructed narratives. If one is an amateur in such a skill, then it would only leave their lord in misfortune. However, we Butlers become very sensitive in detecting such lies in order to protect our masters.”

“.....”

“It is sad to lie. Although sometimes, it is necessary to lie when trying to achieve an end, yet, I believe that it is still not good to lie. If I must say why, then those that know the truth will be left with a deep wound in their heart.”

In Silva’s eyes, Hiiro could see a gleam of sadness and loneliness. Seeing such eyes, Hiiro let out a sigh as he spoke in a faint voice.

“...Hiiro. Hiiro Okamura.”

Saying so, Silva smiled and bowed once again.

“Once again, my name is Silva Pultis. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance!”

Chapter 62: New Pervert (Companion)?

“Well, I’m going ahead.”

He already got the book and shared his meal. There was no more reason for him to be here, so he started off towards the mountain he had set as his destination. But Silva immediately stood in Hihiro’s path.

“...What?”

“Could it be that... you plan on treading into that mountain?”

“Yeah.”

“I would not recommend it, sir.”

“What do you mean?”

Silva started coughing and corrected his posture before speaking.

“That mountain is Venom Mountain . It’s also called the Mountain of Poison .”

“Mountain of... poison?”

As Hihiro furrowed his brow, Silva lightly nodded.

“Hihiro-sama is my life’s savior. So I thought I had to warn you.”

“Hmm. I see.”

Upon saying that line, Hiro signaled Mikazuki to walk forward once more. Of course, in the direction of the mountain. Upon seeing him, Silva opened his eyes wide and hung his mouth open. He was sure that Hihiro would turn back upon gaining that knowledge.

“P-Please wait! Were you not listening to my words?”

“What about them?”

“W-What about them...?”

Silva began matching Mikazuki’s pace as he spoke.

“Do you understand? All of the lifeforms inhabiting that mountain are poisonous, you see. And all of them can prove to be quite lethal.”

“...”

“From what I’ve seen, I do not believe that Hihiro-sama has a body with poison resistance. But because

you are traveling alone, I assume that you have some confidence in your skills. However, I greatly advise you to avoid this route.”

Seeing Silva desperately try to dissuade him, Hiiro assumed that he was telling the truth. But he had no intention of slowing down or turning back.

“Okay, I’ve heard your warning, but if you say any more it’ll just get annoying. No matter what you say, Jii-san¹⁰⁴, I’m still going forward.”

Hearing those words, Silva stopped. As if he had given up, he let out a deep sigh. But suddenly, he let out a loud voice.

“Then I!”

Silva leaped high into the air, and spun his body around and around. He once again stood in Hiiro’s path. Mikazuki seemed dumbfounded by the scene and she stopped walking.

“...Quit it. Don’t hinder me any further.”

After recovering his voice, Hiiro contemplated getting rid of the butler. But Silva lowered his head once more.

“Favors must be repaid in kind! Life must be repaid with life! If I, Silva, were to heed your words and draw back here, if something were to happen to you, then I would never be able to get over that regret. I’ll carry that regret for the rest of my life!”

It probably wasn’t anything that great, but Hiiro concluded that the man before him had a strong sense of duty.

“But stopping you seems next to impossible. Then I, Silva, will use this life to honor my duty! Let me accompany you!”

“No, I’m fine.”

Hiiro immediately shot him down.

“See here. That past exchange was the end of our negotiations. You exchanged your book for my food. That’s the end. I do not wish for any more from you.”

More importantly, he didn’t really want to travel with someone who had just collapsed in the middle of the road. The chance that he would just hold him back was high, so he wanted to deny him by all means.

With his ability to see through lies, perhaps Silva would be useful. But that could also prove to work against him. Hiiro’s appearance was that of an Evila, but he was a proper human.

If that fact came out, then he would be surrounded by trouble. He didn’t want to make any careless decisions here, so it was safest to refuse.

“Don’t follow me, Jii-san. You had a reason for coming here, right? Shouldn’t you be taking care of that?”

Mikazuki starts moving again and passes by Silva.

“Then that’s what I shall do.”

He said something troublesome again. And this time, his voice carried more resolution. Feeling a shiver run down his spine, Hiiro turned his eyes to Silva.

“Listen to this! The Butler Silva’s true objective was this mountain!”

Hiiro’s eyebrows twitched. Sensing danger, Mikazuki stopped and turned around.

“What do you mean?”

“The truth is...”

And it somehow ended up that Hiiro was to listen to Silva’s story.

According to him, he definitely collapsed due to hunger. But he was no adventurer. He was, as he looked, a simple butler in the service of an estate.

On the other side of this mountain was the household he served and his master ordered him to retrieve a certain item. The item could be found only within Venom Mountain .

For a butler, the master’s will was absolute. Using all of his power, Silva thought it was his duty to completely devote himself to his master’s will. So he planned on carrying out his job regardless of the danger.

“My master has a bit of a twisted personality. I always receive impossible requests. Nofofofofofo!”

Hiiro wondered if he should retort at Silva’s description of his master, but he kept quiet and listened.

“But I am a skilled Butler. No matter the problem, I have succeeded in resolving them all. But my master thought that that wasn’t interesting enough, so the requests became more severe.”

Hiiro concluded that the man had his share of grief.

“Anyways, the impossibility has started to become interesting for me too... It’s stimulating. And the master who keeps shoving impossible requests onto me is also cute, and lovable, you know. Nofofo.”

(I take that back. He’s just a masochist.)

He wasn’t suffering at all. He had the mentality that converted his own grief into joy. Hiiro found the old man in front of his eyes to be scary The pervert set out for the mountain right away. But then a problem emerged.

“The truth is, my Sky Carriage didn’t want to listen to me.”

“Hmm? What’s a sky carriage?”¹⁰⁵

“...You don’t know of them?”

Dammit. Perhaps that was supposed to be common sense here. Since Hiiro was stopping by the Evila ’s continent for the first time, he had never learned of the existence of Sky Carriages. Perhaps his

current behavior had given away his identity.

But Silva's next words cleared away Hiiro's unease.

"Is that so? Hiiro-sama appears to be of the Imp Race. I've heard that they don't interact much with other races, but perhaps that has led you to be a bit unaware of the affairs of the world."

It seemed he came to an understanding on his own. By the way, the Imps were a race of the Evila, with dark skin and pointed features. They were great in number, but possess a cowardly nature. Apparently, they avoid interactions with other races.

"The Sky Carriage is a service managed by couriers. A form of business."

They charge money depending on the distance, and carry cargo and people to designated locations. Of course, they transport living things as well. As their name implied, Sky Carriages carried things through the sky.

(Like a taxi, I guess.)

Using this system, Silva set this mountain as his destination and asked to be brought there. But as he approached the mountain, a problem occurred.

"It suddenly became impossible to control the carriage, and while it was planned that I would be dropped here, I was dropped far, far to the east..."

He pointed his finger. In that direction was a sea of trees.

"The Eastern Forest... Also known as the Beguiling Woods. I fell into that place."

"How unlucky."

"Yes... But I am a Butler. I can't give up because of such things. No matter how irregular the situation, it is my duty to follow my master's orders. So I wandered around the forest alone."

"And you had used up all of your strength by the time you got here?"

"It was a great dishonor to me."

Silva lowered his shoulders.

"If you were hungry, why didn't you hunt, or forage?"

"Unfortunately, the Beguiling Woods do not contain anything edible. There are things that look like food, but once you put them in your mouth, you get status afflictions strong enough to change your personality entirely."

That was the scary part of the forest. In it were devilish edibles. All of them had confusing side-effects and their strong effects crumble one's personality and purpose.

(A plain swarming with Rank S monsters, a mountain of poison, and a beguiling forest... I've come to an incredible place...) There wasn't a single safe haven. Hiiro decided that he would have to be more

wary than he could have imagined.

Silva himself took severe damage as he finally exited the forest, but he was constantly attacked by monsters, and there was nothing to eat. After desperately clawing his way here, he gave in to his own hunger and collapsed.

“But I digress. Anyways, I have a reason that I have to enter that mountain.”

“...”

“If you plan on crossing this mountain no matter what, then I think it best if I were to accompany you.”

Silva had to cross it to return home as well. Their destinations were the same.

(But...)

The problem was whether or not he wanted to bring along someone who may be a burden to such a dangerous place. It was not like they were comrades or anything and he didn't have any particular attachment to him. And seeing the old man in front of him get beaten up and poisoned was not a good sight for the eyes.

Mikazuki was enough of a burden to him, but then he remembered something.

He survived the Beguiling Forest and the monsters that attacked him up until now. Perhaps this old man had a little bit of skill. Even though Silva had collapsed from hunger, he had nothing that resembled a serious injury.

Hiiro immediately cast doubtful eyes on Silva. No, perhaps they were appraising eyes.

(This guy... could it be...)

As he thought that, Hiiro secretly tried to write `Pry`. He concentrated magic on his finger. But the next instant, Silva's eyebrow's twitched and he glared at Hiiro's face. Hiiro immediately stopped writing.

“...What happened?”

“...Meaning?”

“No, I just felt a slight flow of magic.”

“!?”

It was truly a shock. It seemed that Silva was able to sense that Hiiro was trying to do something.

(I definitely let out magic, but no one's been able to sense that until now...) Perhaps the Evila race, which specialized in magic, were all sensitive to its flow. He would have to be careful not to use magic in excess from here on. In the end, Hiiro was unable to check Silva's Status screen..

“No, it's nothing.”

That was all he could say. And Silva didn't press any further.

“About that, Hihiro-sama.”

“...What?”

“How about it? I think my knowledge will prove useful to you in some way.”

It was true that Hihiro knew nothing of this land. It was always better to have information than to not have it. But this Jii-san’s aura made it seem that he would be hard to deal with.

(Is he weak or strong... I still don’t know. I might be able to get directions from him, but...) If he accidentally used Word Magic and got found out, a problem might emerge. It wasn’t a magic he wanted to flaunt in front of others so he wanted to refuse, but as their destinations were the same, and as Silva still wanted to return the favor, it may end up that they would be traveling together regardless.

(If I can skillfully draw out whatever info I need and take out monsters with just my katana...) Thinking that, Hihiro made up his mind and turned back to Silva.

“Fine. However, don’t do anything unnecessary. We’ll just be traveling together, got it?”

“Nofofofofo! Understood. I’ll repay my debt in all sincerity! Nofofofofo!”

He respectfully bowed.

(It seems I’ve made a companion I have to be wary around.)

Hihiro gazed at the mountain, with doubts swirling around his head. But this was merely another part of traveling. He hit Mikazuki’s back again, and proceeded forward.

Chapter 63: Venom Mountain

Venom Mountain was spread with a carpet of lush and dense grass. One was able to discover an Evila road that was unlike any of the Gabranth paths. The trees held thickly grown black leaves. There were even uniquely large mushrooms that made it their habitat here.

(That's obviously a poisonous mushroom.)

While thinking so, Hiiro proceeded to walk down the grass road while being extremely wary of his surroundings. In front of him was Silva who was leading the way.

“Please take care, Hiiro-sama. The monsters that inhabit this area are well-versed in mimicry. It is not uncommon for those to be killed by poison fangs before one notices.”

“You seem to know a lot, huh?”

“This is because I am a Butler.”

As he contemplated upon the reason for this, Hiiro thought that Silva might have performed a preliminary investigation before coming here. He was completely different from Hiiro who improvised his actions. Hiiro thought that it became necessary for him to emulate a little bit of Silva's manner of operation.

“Please stop here!”

As Silva's feet abruptly stopped, Mikazuki followed suit.

“What is it?”

“It is those branches.”

In the direction that Silva had pointed his finger were, indeed, thick branches that grew from a large tree. However, all that Hiiro felt when he looked at them was that those were just branches.

“Over there are monsters that are mimicking branches. I presume that they are the monsters referred to as Lagoon¹⁰⁶.”

The knowledge of such a monster did not appear in Hiiro's memory. It was probably a monster specific to the Evila Continent.

“Please observe.”

As he said so, Silva began to retrieve something from his pouch. What had sparkled with a *kira~n*¹⁰⁷ was clearly a knife used for eating. Throwing the knife with a *shuba*¹⁰⁸, he pierced the branch that he had pointed at with his finger earlier.

“*Gugya*¹⁰⁹—!”

At that location, a fat, cobra-like monster appeared, squirming around painfully with a *kunekune*¹¹⁰ due to the knife protruding out of its body. It tried to move, however, as the knife had fastened its body to the branch it was mimicking, it could not escape from that spot.

Soon after, it expelled green blood as its movements stopped, as if forfeiting.

“You’re pretty knowledgeable, huh.”

“That is because I am a Butler.”

“.....Whatever.”

Hiiro convinced himself that this was due to Silva’s eyes having good vision.

“By the way, is this annoying weed zone gonna keep going?”

As the area around one’s feet could not be determined well, it would be a pain if they were attacked from below.

“No, we will soon be approaching an open location. Unlike this area that is lush with long weeds and bushes, this location seems to be a grassland. Should one advance further, they would be met with a zone of granite. Proceeding past this stony area will bring you to the exit of the mountain.”

“I see. In that case, we should probably aim for that open area or something first, huh?”

“Indeed. What I am searching for appears to be in that location.”

It seemed that Silva had been ordered by his master to search for a certain something. As Hiiro had no interest, he didn’t ask any further. After walking for a while, Silva once again abruptly paused.

“Another monster?”

“.....I must apologize.”

As Silva’s eyes were staring straight ahead, he gave his apology.

“What’s up?”

“It appears that we have been completely surrounded.”

“What was that?”

Saying this, Hiiro instantly grew increasingly vigilant. Standing on Mikazuki’s back, Hiiro attentively surveyed his surroundings. However, no matter where Hiiro looked, all he could see around him were weeds. Following this, leaves began to flutter through the air. Hiiro thought that this was caused by the wind.

However, the leaves headed straight for Hiiro.

“Please evade Hiiro-sama!”

“Eh?”

In the instant that Hiiro expressed his confusion, Silva threw the knife towards Hiiro's location. Of course, what Silva was aiming for was not Hiiro, but the leaves. The knife penetrated the leaves before piercing itself into a tree trunk with a *ton*¹¹¹.

Six legs began to grow from the leaves. Similar to the previous Lagoon, it struggled to escape from the knife, yet it drew its last breath as its existence faded.

"That was a Venom Insect¹¹² that disguises itself as tree leaves! It may look small, however, they contain an extremely deadly poison!"

"Ku¹¹³—!"

As he was surrounded by dancing leaves, Hiiro assumed that all of them were those insects as his thoughts raced. As he looked around restlessly, Hiiro began to ponder about how to deal with this situation when— "There is a certain point that you can use to distinguish them! In the center of the leaf, if there is a red dot then they are the Venom Insects!"

While splendidly avoiding the leaves, Silva accurately pierced the insects. With that said, in this blizzard of leaves, identifying only the Venom Insects was a daunting task.

(I guess I've got no choice. If I use this, then the Jii-san will probably disregard it as just normal magic.) As he determined thus, Hiiro cast the word *Fire* to wrap flames around themselves. Of course, he made sure to avoid targeting Mikazuki. The flames spread as if they were a barrier of fire, mercilessly consuming any of the leaves that touched them.

"Oo! So Hiiro-sama was a spell-caster of fire!"

Receiving the reaction that he had expected, Hiiro felt relieved. After one minute passed, the flames naturally extinguished. At the same time, it seemed that the leaves that were dancing around earlier were now neatly and refreshingly burned.

"Nofofofof! In any case, that was quite impressive. Normally, using fire in such a place would result in the flames spreading out of control. I did not believe that you were such a spell-caster capable of controlling the flames so that they would burn only the surrounding area. A thousand pardons."

As the surroundings were full of weeds and trees, it would not be strange for such a flame to turn into a forest fire. However, as Hiiro's magic caused the flames to be erased after a minute had passed, he wasn't concerned. On top of this, as Hiiro had created the fire precisely according to his image, Silva mistook Hiiro as a flame spell-caster that could completely control his magic, an extraordinary mage.

(It looks like it went well, huh.)

"With this much magic, even among those of the *Imp Race*, you must be an extremely talented person, am I correct?"

Hiiro somewhat happily began to speak.

"Aa, in regards to fire magic, I've never lost once."

Although this wasn't a complete lie, as he didn't want to reveal his *Word Magic*, he had no choice but

to phrase his answer as such.

“Nofofofofo! Indeed, indeed. It appears that one such as myself might not have been necessary!”

“More importantly, let’s keep moving. It looks like the grassland is up ahead.”

As the three of them continued walking, they advanced through and exited the weed zone.

[Author’s Note: It looks like the Butler’s pretty skilled¹¹⁴.]

Chapter 64: The Fight With the Cactus Man

As Silva had indicated earlier, the area was absent of overgrown weeds. Looking at the environment filled with a variety of numerous blooming flowers, it was as if they had entered another world.

“Please proceed with caution.”

“You’re trying to say that there are also monsters that mimic flowers here, right?”

“Nofofo, precisely.”

In response Hiiro’s perceptiveness, Silva responded with a beaming smile.

As they plowed through the field while maintaining utmost vigilance, Silva began to grow restless.

“Is this about that thing you were looking for?”

“Yes. It was supposedly growing around this area, yet...”

As he examined a patch of flowers of various vivid hues, his gaze focused on a single flower.

“Oo~, here it is!”

Hiiro similarly directed his gaze. What was there was a flower that blossomed with petals the shade of a rare gold. Its shape and appearance somehow resembled a rose.

“Uu¹¹⁵~, I was finally able to obtain it, Ojou-sama¹¹⁶~”

Taking a handkerchief from his pocket, Silva began to wipe his tears brought forth by overflowing emotions. Perhaps Silva’s heart was moved due to the fact that he achieved his mission in such a treacherous area where one could die at any time.

“Nofofofofo! I have successfully retrieved the Golden Rose !”

At that moment, as if Silva’s sentiments were being interjected¹¹⁷—

*Gogogogogogogogo*¹¹⁸

The environment began to sway. The trembling was so substantial it would make one question whether a magnitude 5¹¹⁹ earthquake was occurring. Following this, a crack ran across the ground that the Golden Rose was growing on. From the crack, something seemed to be squeezed out.

“Kiii~!”

What had raised such a peculiar cry was a monster that had the Golden Rose appended to its head as hair. Its body length was about the size of a passenger carriage’s height, and it had sharp needles covering

its whole body. It was a monster that resembled a cactus with arms and legs.

“A-As I thought, this has been infected by a Parasitic Cactus!”

“What kind of monster is it?”

“Parasitic Cacti usually sleep in the ground, however, they occasionally feed by latching onto high-vitality flowers for their nutrition! The Golden Rose has oft been referred to as the ‘rose that will never wither’. It’s not a plant whose vitality would be classified as miniscule. In addition, the flower also possesses special effects. I had anticipated that a Parasitic Cactus would feed on it, however, I sincerely wished that I would not have to encounter one.”

“I see.”

As he returned a faint nod, he instructed Mikazuki to keep her distance.

“Well then, although it was hard to do anything earlier, it looks like I’ll be able to move as I please this time. I’ll help you clean this up.”

“Please wait, Hiiro-sama! If you were to use fire, then—!”

In as state of panic, Silva shot off a string of words.

“I know. You’re saying that I’ll end up burning the Golden Rose, right? Calm down, I’m not gonna use fire.”

As he spoke, he drew out his Thorn Sword — Piercer. Seeing this katana¹²⁰, Silva was impressed as he widened his eyes.

“Nofofo, that is the Thorn Sword — Piercer, is it not!?”

“Nn¹²¹? You know of it?”

“Indeed. As—”

However, as if restating that this was no time for leisure, the Parasitic Cactus’s needles flew at them.

“Nofo!”

“Yotto¹²²! We’ll talk later! First, let’s crush this guy!”

As the two evaded the needles, they distanced themselves from the cactus.

“H-However, are you certain about this? This opponent is of substantially highly skilled.”

“Fun, it’s perfect for leveling up. Oi, Cactus Man! If you’re gonna fight then get your ass over here!”

In face of Hiiro’s provocation, the Parasitic Cactus approached while raising a fairly loud groan. If they were to collide, Hiiro would undoubtedly be skewered by the myriad of thorns growing all over the Cactus Man’s body.

“As those needles contain poison, please be cautious.”

“Got it!”

Strongly kicking off the ground, Hiiro slipped past the Parasitic Cactus’s right side, turning towards its back. As Hiiro was going to plunge his katana into the Cactus Man’s back, the cactus began to shoot the needles on its back towards Hiiro’s direction.

“This asshole—!?”

In an instant, Hiiro considered cutting down the projectile needles with his katana. However, as the number of needles were overwhelming, he determined that he would soon become prey to a countless number of the Cactus Man’s thorns, being the end of him.

(Shit! If it comes to this, I should use the Protect word and—!)

As Hiiro was about to attempt to use Word Magic out of necessity, Silva suddenly appeared in front of him, spreading his arms wide as if he were shielding Hiiro.

*Busubusubusubusubusubusubusu*¹²³

“Jii-san!”

The needles mercilessly pierced Silva’s body.

As if it was exhausted after expelling all of its needles, the Parasitic Cactus’s movements halted. Silva slightly moved his mouth.

“...N-Now...is the....time.....if you...sever the....flower from the head, then....”

It seemed that the cactus would be defeated if the flower from the head was cut. Thinking that he had to do something to the Parasitic Cactus, Hiiro placed a large amount of force in his feet as he made a huge leap.

“Haa—!”

Hiiro used his katana to cut the stem of the Golden Rose . The Golden Rose was splendidly severed from the Parasitic Cactus’s body. The body of the Parasitic Cactus that was of a green tint, changed to an earthly shade before collapsing as if it were made of sand. Only the Golden Rose remained.

Taking the Golden Rose on top of the sand that was once the Parasitic Cactus, Hiiro spat out a sigh with a *Fu*¹²⁴~. Following this, as if suddenly occurring to him, he looked toward Silva.

Seeing the state that Silva was in, Hiiro widened his eyes without thinking. As to why, this was because...

“Fu~, yareyare.”

As if he were simply brushing off dust, Silva began to brush off the needles with a *pasapasa*¹²⁵. In addition, he was doing it nonchalantly.

“...Jii-san, the poison?”

No matter how one looked at it, Silva’s countenance was not one of somebody suffering from any sort of

deadly poison. Hearing Hiiro's doubts, Silva returned his question with a pleasant smile.

"There is no issue."

".....Ha—?"

"Because I am a Butler."

"....."

As Hiiro's cheat was also outside the realm of the 'standard', he couldn't help but feel a connection with the elderly man before him who had also apparently exceeded the norm.

"Oi, weren't you speaking really painfully earlier?"

Certainly, during the time when Silva informed Hiiro of the weak point concerning the flower, his face was distorted in considerable pain.

"Nofofofofo.....let us just say, that I conformed with the atmosphere?"

"....This Jiji¹²⁶."

Piki. A blue vein appeared on Hiiro's forehead. It seemed that he had only put on an act in order to fit the situation.

"In any case, Hiiro-sama. The Golden Rose is...?"

"...Ha~, here."

Even if he were to pursue it further, Hiiro somehow understood that Silva would just answer 'Because I am a Butler', shrouding the truth in a cloud of mist. As he determined that this meant the butler did not want to disclose any more, Hiiro simply answered him without investigating further.

"Oo~, with this, I can finally return to the mansion!"

As he received the Golden Rose from Hiiro by gently wrapping both his hands around it, he raised it towards the sky, using it as a background as he gazed at it.

"I am eternally grateful, Hiiro-sama! It was truly thanks to you that I was able to obtain the item that I was searching for without harm! Nofofofofo!"

"Good for you."

As Hiiro said this without any particular feelings charged into it, he sheathed his katana. Seeing this, Silva expressed an 'Oo~' as he tapped his hand with a *pon*¹²⁷.

"Speaking of which, about our previous conversation..."

"Ah? ...Aa, you mean about the katana?"

In the middle of the encounter, Silva brought up a story concerning the Thorn Sword — Piercer. His atmosphere indicated that he was familiar with it.

“Indeed. I believe that is the Thorn Sword — Piercer, correct?”

“Aa, what of it? It’s not for sale.”

“Nofofo! I am not indicating that I desire that katana. It is just that as it has been such a long time since I have seen that katana, I couldn’t help but get a little emotional with my words.”

“A long time? You’ve seen it?”

“Indeed. That katana happens to be one produced by a dear friend of mine. Well, the Thorn Sword — Piercer was a prototype that was developed in a single attempt, but...”

“A prototype...you say?”

“Indeed. Although he is a Gabranth, he is a swordsmith¹²⁸ that has an arm that cannot be compared with any other. How nostalgic~. I wonder as to how he is doing right now...”

As he saw Silva’s distant eyes immersed in nostalgia, Hiiro opened his mouth with a skeptical expression.

“This is a prototype?”

If you were to put it succinctly, its sharpness was outstanding and its ease of use was admirable compared to other swords in its group. This katana, Hiiro couldn’t count how many times he had been saved by it. He thought that its absence would undoubtedly have made his journey more difficult.

Hearing that such workmanship amounted to a prototype at most, Hiiro could not help but suspect those words.

“That is, without a doubt, a prototype. I say this because his genuine works often have his signature applied to the hilt and the blade.”

Upon closely inspecting the katana, Hiiro could not find anything resembling a signature.

“In addition, if that were genuine, a monster of that level would be sliced with one swing.”

“...So his real works are at that level, huh?”

“You are correct. Well, even if a prototype, his katanas tend to select their own owners. In my eyes, that katana appears to be very satisfied. Satisfied that it is in the hands of a good owner.”

In the face of this statement, Hiiro began to feel an itchy feeling infested in him. As he determined that should this continue, he would grow sick due to the cozy atmosphere, he began to change the topic.

“A-Any way. Where’re you going from here? You’ve finished you’re errand, right Jii-san?”

“Eh? Ah, indeed. If we were to advance, we would soon reach the granite area. As it is a downward slope from there, the exit of the mountain will follow soon after.”

“I see. Then let’s hurry up and move.”

“As you wish.”

“Oi, Yodare-tori¹²⁹! Show yourself!”

As Hiiro called for Mikazuki, she poked her head out from behind a tree with a *hyoko*¹³⁰.

“Yosh, let’s quickly get off of this mountain.”

Chapter 65: Towards the Mansion

With assistance and information supplied by Silva, Hiiro passed through the rocky terrain, defeated various monsters and exited Venom Mountain without encountering any major issues.

“Even so, I’m impressed that you are so strong! Nofofofofof.”

“Is that so? I’m surprised an old man like you can fight. But...”

This was true. Silva had known a lot about the monsters that they faced and didn’t waste a single motion or movement when dealing with them. He was also able to precisely attack the vital points of his opponents. His actions and abilities were like those of an experienced adventurer.

Hiiro knew that the Evila had great combat ability. If even normal people like Silva were this strong, it was hard for him to imagine how powerful the Evila could become.

Silva was not an adventurer. As he was forced to become independent at an early age, he was hired to work for at a residence due to some unknown circumstance. Ever since, he had been working as a butler.

Hiiro arrived at the conclusion that Silva acquired his combat skills and knowledge in order to protect his master. As a side note, Hiiro was able to acquire such information not because he had asked, but because Silva kept talking about himself after proposing that they should conduct some ‘communication’.

“We’ll cross the mountains soon. Is there a town past these mountains?”

“A town...hmm, if you are searching for a settlement, then there is one far beyond these mountains.”

“How far?”

“Very, very far.”

“.....”

It seemed that there was still a long way to go.

“If it is fine with you, I would like to go back to the mansion and use my skill to treat you to a dinner with the Gold Rose.”

“...Dinner?”

Hiiro’s ears perked up as he swallowed.

“Indeed. Even though I may look like this, I have some confidence in my cooking skills.”

“Really?”

“Of course, there is the Puryun Fruit as well.”

“Kui kui kui kui kui!”

Upon hearing the name of her favorite food, Mikazuki became overjoyed.

“Are you sure it’s alright? Don’t you need your master’s permission?”

“That is true, however, I believe there is nothing to be concerned about.”

“What’s with that baseless confidence?”

“In my opinion, the master is someone that would neither accept nor refuse a person.”

“Fu~”

“Well, if it is a person that Master likes, Master will usually try to obtain that person regardless of the means.”

“What a peculiar master...”

Hihiro thought that what he described was no different than kidnapping.

“Master is also so cute. Aah...how long has it been...how I want to look at Ojou-sama’s adorable face as soon as possible...and then be commanded.”

(Aah...I almost forgot, this guy’s a big pervert...and also an M¹³¹ ...) Seeing the old man, who had his cheeks flushed red from ecstasy, staring up in a trance, Hihiro quickly distanced himself from him. Somehow also sensing that the old man was dangerous, Mikazuki also followed suit.

However, it was undeniable that Hihiro found Silva’s offer enticing. Even though there was indeed a town past the mountain, it was quite a considerable distance away. He concluded that going with the old man would be a good opportunity to rest, and obtain some information as well.

Thus, Hihiro decided to change his next destination to Silva’s house, and then continue his journey from there.

“Oooooooooojoooouu-saaaaaaamaaaaa!”

A girl wearing a maid uniform hastily headed towards a room, sweat flying off of her forehead. Her twin tails colored a light peach swayed back and forth as she ran. She stopped in front of a door, pausing in order to try and control her ragged breathing before she unsteadily opened the door. However— *Pote*¹³²

Even though there was no obstacle nearby, the girl somehow tripped over her own feet, falling onto her face as she opened the door.

“*Puni~*”

The girl began to tear up as she rubbed her nose.

“*Fufue~*, it hurts~”

The girl had faint freckles apparent on her cheeks and something that resembled a red jewel was embedded in the center of her forehead. She possessed charming facial features with eyes that were large and round, resembling the shape of chestnuts. Her skin was saturated with a brown pigment.

She herself was at the age of 16, yet, as this was not very apparent in both her appearance or behavior, she seemed to have a complex about it. However, her key feature was undeniably her chest. Her ample breasts would bounce (*Purun Purun*) with each motion.

Even though her proportions and style were good, her face and stature were relatively small. As she was constantly teased about this by the master that she served, it had become one of her recent concerns.

As the girl entered the dim room, there were skulls, swords, eerie masks and various solemn devices scattered around. The dimly lit room looked as if someone was practicing black magic.

In the center of the room, there was a large magic circle. On top of said circle was a bed veiled by a dark curtain.

“You’re so noisy, Shamoe.”

The voice came from the bed. A silhouette of a person could be seen behind the curtain veil. The person didn’t make any motions to revitalize herself as she just sat up. The maid, referred to as Shamoe, stood up at attention and spoke with a tense voice.

“I~I-I-I’mmmmmm sorry! I~I-I-I fell down again.”

“That aside, did something happen?”

Upon hearing Shamoe’s words, the person let out a sigh. As the person was just asleep, she appeared to be in a particularly bad mood.

“Th-Th-That’s right, u-um-um-um-um!”

“It is alright so please calm down.”

“Ye-Yes. *Ha~fu~*, *ha~fu~*”

As Shamoe took several deep breaths to calm herself, her chest slightly moved up and down. Following this, she then brought both her hands between her chest.

“A-Actually, t-they c-came home.”

She spoke with an excited voice and sparkling eyes.

“...Came home?”

“Yes, Silva-sama came home.”

“.....Damn, he didn’t die, that pervert.”

“Yes? Did you say something?”

“No, it’s nothing, that aside is he inside the house?”

“Eh, ah, yes! But...”

“Hn? But what...?”

The sudden pause in Shamoe’s voice caused her to worry.

“U-Um, that is, he brought someone with him.”

“...Brought someone?”

“Y-Yes, his savior who crossed the Venom Mountain with him, it seems that he is of the Imp Race .”

“Really?”

Having piqued her interest she opened her mouth in a smirk.

“F-First, we should prepare some appetizers for the guest. I-Is something wrong?”

As Shamoe understood that her master may have been in a bad mood due to being abruptly roused from their sleep, she thought that she might have executed something offensive and became flustered.

“...First off, start preparing food for Silva and the guest.”

“T-Then?”

“Aa, I was getting bored. It might be good to pass some time. I can talk leisurely with our guest while we are eating. Kukuku.”

“U-Understood!”

Shamoe bowed her head once before leaving the room. On the way out, a *puni* sound could be heard. It was clear that Shamoe had tripped once again. The person that remained in the room was thinking carefully about the guest, so she did not pay it any mind.

“Kukuku, that idiot brought a person with him...I wonder what kind of fellow he is...?”

Within that dark room, only the eyes of the person within suspiciously glowed.

[Author's Note: What do you think about the new character lolol.]

Chapter 66: The Chaotic Trio

Hiiro, who had passed by the guest room, looked back at the path that his journey had taken him through so far.

After he had hiked over the mountain, a forest had appeared before him. Speeding through such a forest, he was met with a small lake that spread itself across the horizon. In the center of the lake stood a lone island.

The lake was so peculiar that it wouldn't be strange to expect to see a donut shape if one were to view the lake from the sky. In other words, the island played the perfect role as the donut hole. The lake water had a shade of deep crimson as the small floating island exuded an overwhelming presence.

The reason for this was due to what was on top of the island. Perhaps in an attempt to highlight the island's presence, a fairly large mansion had been erected upon it. Similar to the previously seen King's Tree, a garden was spread, surrounding the mansion. It held gorgeous flowers and raised plantation that secreted a pleasant aroma.

Silva stated that that mansion was the one he served in. As a boat had been prepared nearby, they had decided to ride on it. It seemed that as this boat was facing the Mountain of Poison, it could be determined that Silva had used this when crossing the lake.

As they got on the boat, while leisurely making their way to the island, Hiiro was informed about the background of the mansion.

There seemed to be three individuals that lived in this house, including Silva. There was the Master, the Maid and the Butler. This meant that other than these three, there were no other people on the premises.

It seemed that the garden that was visible from the boat was created for the sake of the maid's hobby. In addition, Hiiro was told that as the master was very whimsical, her personality was very difficult to deal with.

Certainly, one would not normally send their servant off towards the toxic Venom Mountain. Was this an indication of the extent that the master trusted Silva, or...

As Hiiro thought so, he arrived on the island. Mikazuki looked at Hiiro as if asking him what she should do. As Silva was obviously unable to grant her entry into the mansion, it was decided that she would be kept in a feeding ground for livestock. As it was fairly close, Hiiro waited while Silva led Mikazuki towards the feeding grounds.

Upon looking at it up close, the mansion's size seemed to have increased. It was without a doubt an establishment that emanated wealth. Yet, as the only residents of the mansion were only three people, Hiiro certainly thought it was peculiar. As Hiiro was not particularly interested, however, he didn't bother to ask about it.

As Hiiro exited the garden and approached the mansion entrance, he encountered a lone girl, cleaning as she held a broom in hand.

Noticing their presence, the maid widened her eyes with all her might as she startlingly shrieked Silva's name. Following this, she kept weeping "Thank goodness. Thank heavens."¹³³ with watery eyes. She then redirected her gaze towards Hiiro.

Upon realizing that she was completely visible to Hiiro, she winced for whatever reason as her body trembled in fright. As he had determined that he was not very welcomed, Hiiro approached as he wore a wry smile.

When Silva explained as to who Hiiro was, the frightened atmosphere surrounding her slightly subsided. However, her eyes immediately widened as she stuttered "W-W-W-W-We need to report this!", following which she opened the door with tremendous speed before entering the mansion. In the instant that she tried to enter the mansion, however, she flashily tumbled to the floor with a *doka*¹³⁴. As there was nothing that one would be able to stumble on within the vicinity, those who would bear witness to such a scene would feel exasperated.

As Silva looked over her situation while wearing a seemingly pleasant smile—

"Iya¹³⁵~ As expected, a young lady is pleasant, don't you agree~? That *purunpurun*¹³⁶ is absolutely irresistible~ Nofofofofo~!"

Let us retract the previous statement.¹³⁷ If one were to inspect closely, Silva's cheeks were slightly flushed and his nose was slightly extended. In addition, there was a dangerous light lurking in the depths of his eyes. Seeing this, Hiiro involuntarily backed away.

"Now then, shall we proceed inside."

Even though he said this, Hiiro began to seriously consider whether it would be fine to follow after such a pervert. However, as he had come all the way here, he considered that it would be fine to enter as long as he remained vigilant of the pervert.

Although the inside was considerably dim, tall vases, paintings and other ornaments decorated the surroundings. The cleaning seemed to be very meticulous as there was barely any dust and the decorations were kept in very good condition. Although this was probably the maid's work, Hiiro was genuinely impressed as cleaning such a large mansion with such attentive detail was no easy feat.

As Hiiro passed the guest room, he was told to wait there. Thus, he did as he was told as he placed himself on a sofa.

(Putting that all aside, this is a pretty huge mansion, huh?)

Hiiro thought as he stared at the lake visible from the window. Although it was true that a mansion surrounded by a lake might certainly sound like a romantic place, Hiiro couldn't help but wonder why they would conspicuously build a mansion on top of an island as it seemed severely inconvenient.

Was it built due to the indulgence of wealth? Or was it built for some other reason...

(Well, I don't really give a damn. After I finish eating, I'm outta here.)

It would be just as it was before. As he determined that he would continue his journey alone, he began to write words on his arm,

(For Mikazuki, I'll set Speed and Protect . Just in case something happens, I'd better be prepared.)

The words Hiiro wrote on his arm were Protect , Speed and Pry . The first two words were generally used to deal with a predicament should it arise. The third word, Pry , when activated instantly allowed Hiiro to view the target's Status . As Silva was overly sensitive to magical energy, if Hiiro wanted to use magic, he would quickly draw his attention. As such, Hiiro deemed that his abilities would be eventually revealed.

As such, if he were to set up the words in advance, he could activate magic while eliminating the need to write the words by concentrating magic in his finger. Also, it was possible to activate the magic and obtain its effects, even in a short time period.

(Well, there's still the one minute time limit before I can activate it but...well, I doubt I'll get a chance to use it.)

Putting the matter of the time limit aside, Hiiro could now wait for Silva to come before activating the words. However, Hiiro doubted that Silva would come within a minute. He also set up the words not for the purpose of using them against Silva, but for investigating his master.

As he believed that he would not be simply taken straight to the dining table, Hiiro thought that even though the other party was wealthy, it would still be preferable to have information about them than not. To that end, seeing as he could get a glimpse of their Status , he was in a very advantageous situation.

Once he had made his preparations, Hiiro waited for a while before Silva returned. As his butler uniform that had been previously dirty was now clean, it was apparent that he had gone to change his clothes.

“Now, please come this way, for I will introduce you to the master.”

Following Silva's direction, Hiiro departed from the guest room. As Hiiro walked through a lengthy corridor, a pleasant aroma drifted into the passageway, tickling his nasal cavity.

Gugyuruu¹³⁸~

Due to the smell, a stomach began to growl. However, the source of the sound did not come from Hiiro.

“Iya~, I believe that my stomach seems to be quite famished~”

“Bastard, you ate my food, didn't you!?”

Before they had arrived here, almost all of Hiiro's food had now been supposedly residing in Silva's stomach. In spite of this, the fact that Silva's stomach was howling was truly shocking.

“Nofofofofo! I must be ready for any situation that arises! Because I am a Butler! Nofofofofo!”

“Not that again...”

As he looked carefully at the hungry, perverted butler, Hiiro could only spit out a sigh. Hiiro wanted to make a tsukkomi, saying that being a butler was utterly unrelated!

“Behold, we have arrived.”

As Hiiro was stopped in front of the door, Silva began to slowly open it. What appeared before him were several long desks covered in pure white tablecloths, on top of which were a variety of dishes neatly arranged. The odor was so stimulating it made one involuntarily swallow salivation.

At the end of the long tables was someone sitting in a chair.

“I welcome you, unusual visitor.”

She possessed long hair that seemed to look like flames as it maintained a hue of fiery crimson. As she raised her strong, assertive eyes towards Hiiro’s direction, her lovely little lips distorted into the shape of a crescent moon. Her pure white, gothic lolita-style dress matched her red hair splendidly.

Although being watched by evaluating eyes was unpleasant, there was something else that caught Hiiro’s attention.

(This person couldn’t be...?)

As he thought this, Hiiro glanced at Silva, to which Silva responded with a small nod.

“I shall proceed with the introductions. This is the master of this mansion. Liliyn Li Reysis Redrose-sama.”

Hearing Silva’s introduction, Hiiro carefully looked at Liliyn.

(As I thought..... but even so.....)

He once again examined Liliyn. He lightly exhaled.

(.....isn’t she just a brat?)

Indeed, her appearance was indisputably a child. She was very much similar to Muir. Well, as Muir was too young, perhaps the comparison would apply better to Mimir.

What was before him could only be described as a girl around the age of ten. However, Hiiro knew that Silva would not tell such a pointless lie. As such, the little girl that was in front of his eyes was really the master of this mansion, the person Silva served.

(So this kid was the perpetrator responsible for sending Silva to the mountain of poison?)

It was natural to doubt this suspicion, however, Silva simply pulled out a comb from his pocket and began to adjust his hair.

“Oh dear oh dear, nofofofofo.”

As Silva said thus, Liliyn began to pout as her face was filled with disgust. Whether or not Silva noticed

her expression, he continued.

“Aa...as usual, such a beautiful and adorable Ojou-sama...”

As he wondered what the hell Silva was saying, Hiiro merely looked at him.

“No, I am mistaken. Compared to before, you shine as if a you were a bewitching moon upon a mystical dark night. Your charm that knows not of tranquility. I...I...”

Seeing this, Liliyn simply shook her head in grief.

“I AM INDESCRIBABLY OVERJOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOYED!!!!”

As Silva’s body was trembling, he abruptly leaped towards Liliyn. Following this.....

“Ojjoussamaaaaaaaaa~n-!!!!”

While enthusiastically pouting his lips, Silva flew through the air with his arms spread wide. Although Hiiro had seen many of Silva’s eccentricities, even he was stunned, left speechless by the current situation.

Dogo! Baki! Bako! Bogo~n!

After a few moments had passed, Silva’s head was plunged into the floor. The figure that had trampled on his back with a single foot was Liliyn. The maid that was close to the two began to panic as she unconsciously kept spouting “Awa awa”¹³⁹.

“Unbelievable, this perverted Jiji bastard! Why the hell doesn’t he just die!?”

Although it seemed that the little girl had spoken something outrageous, a muffled voice could be heard from under the floor.

“This....this is....what they call...love....”

*Bakin*¹⁴⁰!

“*Bufo*¹⁴¹—!”

It seemed that the girl had apparently dealt the finishing blow to the pervert. As the body was trampled by her foot, it made an unpleasant sound. Ever since, the perverted Jiji remained silent.

After dusting herself off with a *ponpon*, she placed herself down onto the seat that she had sat down in previously.

“Well, I have exterminated the creepy insect. Shamoe, introductions.”

Liliyn continued the self-introductions as if nothing had just occurred. The provoked maid let out a “Feh¹⁴²!?” as she hurriedly lowered her head.

“A-Awawawawawa! S-Shamoe is, well—! Um, Shamoe is a maid so I do the cleaning, the cooking and gardening as a hobby for a maid, i-i-i-i-i-f you were to put it simply, then I am just an average

maid!”

“...You said that you were a maid three times in your introduction though?”¹⁴³

“Fe—I-I-I-I’ve failed again!”

Her face flushed a bright scarlet. And then—

*Gongongongongongongongon*¹⁴⁴!

She began hammering her forehead against the wall.

“Baka baka baka baka—I Shamoe is a big baka! Even though I decided that I would do it correctly~~!”

Hihiro began to reassess the situation. Buried under the floor was the head of a perverted butler. Near the wall was a maid that suddenly panicked, slamming her head repeatedly in tears. Lastly, the one who was grinning while overlooking the maid’s antics, a little girl

(This is undoubtedly chaos...)

Hihiro began to suspect that he was largely mistaken in coming to this mansion.

[Author’s Note: Iya~ such an amusing trio lolol¹⁴⁵.]

Chapter 67: The Devious Girl — Liliyn

After a while, the maid had slightly calmed down, allowing Hiiro to elicit her name. Shamoe Arneil. That was her name. If she were to remain silent, she would undoubtedly be a pretty girl, despite the freckles on her cheeks. However, as she stuttered throughout her speech and often tripped over nothing, she was practically the definition of a clumsy girl.

“Well then, isn’t about time we heard about you?”

Liliyn’s eyes sparkled with intrigue as she stared at Hiiro. However, Silva, who had imperceptibly revived, lowered his head as he respectfully bowed.

“In which case, please allow me.”

“...—Tch, you already revived, huh.”

As she literally clicked her tongue, she unleashed words full of disgust.

“Nofofo, well then. The person before you is Hiiro Okamura-sama. He is the benefactor who saved my life at the entrance of the toxic Venom Mountain .”

“Fumu. I have heard this much from Shamoe. Hiiro or whatever, even if he is a pervert, he is my possession. I give you my thanks.”

“More importantly, can I eat now?”

No matter where he was, Hiiro was unwaveringly honest in his desires. As he had been forced to wait while a scrumptious meal had been prepared before him, Hiiro was at his limit. The only thing reflected in Hiiro’s eyes was the enticing cuisine laid about the tables.

Hearing Hiiro’s bluntness, Liliyn could only stare blankly while blinking several times. Her gaze shifted towards Silva. He simply nodded while faintly smiling. It was as if he were saying that the person before them was an intriguing individual.

“Ahahahaha! I see, I see! He looks like such an interesting boy!”

Although Hiiro would normally scowl at those words, as he was wrestling with hunger, he seemed to be in a half-crazed state.

“Yosh, I guess we can continue as we eat. Silva, Shamoe.”

““Yes, as you command.””

As expected, the two of them bowed. Following this, Shamoe approached Liliyn as she handed her a napkin. Silva, on the other hand, pulled out a chair immediately in front of Hiiro, as if trying to aid him. As Hiiro sat down, Liliyn began to speak.

“Now, let’s eat.”

However, before she even spoke those words, Hiiro had begun to ceaselessly shove pieces of food down his mouth.

“...W-Well, I guess it’s fine. It’s good to be able to enjoy it fully.”

Although she was stunned, after seeing Hiiro stuffing his face, she faintly smiled. It seemed that the other two were overwhelmed as they observed Hiiro, however, Hiiro was absolutely oblivious to them.

(Kukuku, I get it.)

Liliyn gloated before she began to similarly bring food towards her mouth.

As Hiiro was smacking his lips, relishing in the buffet, he began to speak as he suddenly noticed something that concerned him.

“Oi, aren’t Jii-san and the maid gonna eat?”

“Mu¹⁴⁶? You alright with that? This was made with the intention of thanking you, you know?”

“Like you can talk. You’re also eating, aren’t you?”

“Isn’t that obvious? What the mansion owns is mine.”

“Fu~n. Well, not that I care, but there’s a substantial amount of food. Even if they eat, shouldn’t it be fine?”

Since Silva’s stomach was howling earlier, there was a slight reluctance to continue eating should it be only the two of them.

“I see. Well, that’s how it is. You two, sit down.”

“B-But I—!?”

“Shamoe, the master’s orders are?”

Silva posed a question to Shamoe.

“A...Absolute.”

She sat down while shrinking her body.

“Well then~, Itadakimasu¹⁴⁷-zo¹⁴⁸~”

Silva emitted these words joyfully. Shamoe’s expression also seemed to somewhat soften as she took some bread and began to eat it.

“But you’re a pretty unusual fellow, aren’t ya?”

“Nn?”

“You know that normally, people wouldn’t let servants sit at the same table and allow them to have a meal together, right?”

“I could say the exact same back to you.”

Ultimately, Liliyn was the master of the mansion. Even so, she allowed her employees to share the same dining table with her with little resistance, something that was most uncommon. Therefore, it could be observed that rather than the guest, it was Liliyn who was the peculiar one.

“Fun, if everyone eats together, isn’t it more efficient?”

“Well, I guess there’s that. But don’t most people care about appearances?”

“This is my mansion. I don’t take crap from no one.”

Apparently, the individual known as Liliyn prioritized her freedom, as opposed to those close-minded aristocrats that were stubbornly fixated on social status. Hiiro felt that such an attitude was appealing as he continued to fill his mouth with food.

(Putting that aside, this fish is really good.)

Hiiro stared at the fish fillet pierced by his fork.

“Nofofo, that is a fish that exclusively inhabits this lake, the Hammock . It’s white meat is full of protein. If left to simmer until the meat has darkened, the flavor becomes even richer.”

“I see. It’s certainly not bad. *hamu*¹⁴⁹ *mogumogu*¹⁵⁰ ...what’s this?”

Following this, he began to eat something resembling ham that was wrapped up with many layers, forming a cylinder. Curious, he inquired its identity.

“Oh yes, those are Grand Slime Spring Rolls .”

“*Gohho! Gohogohogoho!* The hell’d you say!?”

Hiiro felt that he noticed a word that he could not let pass by.

“Indeed, those are Grand Slime Spring Rolls .”

“.....”

It seemed that Hiiro was not mistaken. Upon inspection it was colored red and significantly resembled ham, even though it seemed slightly jelly-like. Also, according to Hiiro’s memory, Grand Slime’s should be colored green.

“Although most of the Grand Slime is inedible, a part that resides in its center, referred to as the Red Sphere , is said to be a palatable delicacy.”

It suddenly came to Hiiro that he remembered the Grand Slime possessing a red part that acted as its nucleus. He also had the feeling that upon attacking it, it would burst into flames.

“With that said, it is a fairly difficult recipe. Are you aware that Red Spheres will ignite upon reckless stimuli.”

“Aa, as I fought some on my way here I know all too well.”

Liliyn raised her eyebrows upon hearing Hiiro’s words. Of course, Hiiro did not notice.

“Is that so? To cook the Red Sphere, it is necessary to braise it in boiling water for several hours. Once preparations are complete, you must apply a knife in a way that will not ignite the sphere. After which, the taste—”

Silva popped the Red Sphere into his mouth.

“Nofofofofo! The flavor is so strong it would melt one’s palate!”

Hiiro followed suit and began to eat it. Although he was slightly concerned whether it would burst into flames, upon experiencing its aroma and flavor spreading throughout his mouth, his anxiety was completely dispelled.

(This is pretty good. It’s so crunchy that I can’t believe it came from that over-sized slime. It’s as if I was eating cartilage¹⁵¹. The more I chew, the more the rich flavor spreads.)

Just as Hiiro thought that this would be perfect as a side dish with sake, the little girl before him brought out a wine bottle as she continued to eat the Red Sphere.

(From what I’ve observed, the Chibi-usagi seemed to be an exception but...are all little girls in this world alcoholics?)

Upon recollection, Chibi-usagi was Arnold’s Shishou who went by the name of Rarashik. As she had the appearance of a five-year-old that seemed to constantly be holding onto liquor bottles, she seemed to be registered as a fantasy figure in Hiiro’s eyes.

However, as Liliyn was drinking out of a wine glass, it was a mystery as to why the scene seemed strangely picturesque. It seemed that she was quite accustomed to drinking.

“Kukuku, by the way, Hiiro or whatever, I’ve heard that you’re not too shabby. How about it?”

Perhaps noticing Hiiro’s gaze, Liliyn spoke as she locked eyes with him.

“How about what?”

“Don’t play dumb. From what I’ve seen, you’re of the Imp Race, however, those guys usually act in herds. Well, I have heard that sometimes they move independently. Alright, let’s make it so you’re one of those solo Imps. However, you being in the mountains doesn’t really make sense, right?”

“...What doesn’t?”

“Kukuku, didn’t you say earlier that you fought Grand Slimes?”

“Aa.”

“In other words, you’ve come from beyond the Gloomy Grasslands , correct?”

“That’s right.”

Wondering what the hell she was trying to say, Hiiro scowled.

“Certainly that is the Grand Slime’s habitat. However, it is a place where monsters of Rank S and above are plentiful. Following this, you crossed that mountain of poison and made it here.”

“...”

“You are quite remarkable. To be able to consume the Imp Race’s most despised food, the Red Sphere .”

“—!?”

Hiiro involuntarily strained his face. Apparently, Liliyn had doubts about Hiiro’s identity. With that said, the conversation they just had was not necessarily true. As such, Hiiro could not afford to break his poker face.

Staring closely at Hiiro’s face, Liliyn snickered as she made a huge grin.

“Aa. By the way, when I say despised, I’m not talking about simple preferences. When consumed, their bodies would reject it so much that it could be fatal...this is the level of loathing that I’m talking about.”

This was bad. Although he was still unsure whether what she had said was true, if it was, his disguise of being one of the Imp Race would be revealed.

(Actually, why wasn’t any of this mentioned in the book!? That fucking author!)

Although Hiiro had an extreme urge to burn that picture book, the problem right now was how he was going to survive in such a situation.

“Yet, you nonchalantly popped that Red Sphere into your mouth. Actually, it is even weirder for you not to have known of its existence. Even if you had some sort of resistance against it, to not know your race’s number one weakness is truly strange.”

It was as she had indicated. Hiiro began to gradually grow cornered.

“Aa. And another thing, those Hammock are the Imp Race’s natural enemy.”

(This brat...)

Hiiro realized that this entire meal was a trap. Glancing at the other two, Hiiro saw that, in contrast to Liliyn, they wore apologetic expressions. It seemed that these two had apparently been aware of it.

Hiiro clenched his hand into a fist. He quietly extended his forefinger, preparing himself so he could cast magic at any instant.

Looking at Hiiro’s stern expression, Liliyn laughed as she was intrigued. She then began to speak.

“Kukuku, don’t misunderstand me. I don’t really care whether or not you are a part of the Imp Race .”

“...?”

“You just simply piqued my interest. Why are you walking around in such an appearance...you’re not a part of the Imp Race, right? Eeh¹⁵²? Unusual Visitor?”

Hiiro had remembered her using the phrase ‘Unusual Visitor’ when she greeted him. Then it suddenly clicked. Hiiro realized that ever since she met him, she had planned on satiating her curiosity.

“Do I have any reason to tell you?”

“Fumu. Certainly not. However, this is essentially the center of my stronghold¹⁵³. I don’t mind if I have to resort to...extreme measures?”

Hiiro felt a certain stimulus in the back of his eyes. His throat involuntarily made a sound. Following which, Hiiro heard a hard cough *gohon*. He swerved around, the sight of Silva lowering his head entering Hiiro’s eyes.

“Please excuse my rudeness, Hiiro-sama.”

“...”

“However, I must also ask of you to engage in my Master’s discussion. I also wish to know the truth about you, the one who saved my life.”

“Jii-san...”

“In actuality, the Imp Race is a race that is extremely vulnerable to poison. Yet, as Hiiro headed towards that toxic mountain, you were undeniably calm. This is something that has bothered me quite a bit.”

It was at that moment that Hiiro suddenly remembered. Silva wore a desperate expression as he tried to prevent Hiiro from entering the mountain. This was most likely due to the fact that he thought Hiiro, being one of the Imp Race, would surely lose his life.

“I had also wondered whether or not you were truly of the Imp Race. It was most likely that my master had some misgivings about you due to your successful journey through the toxic mountain. Thus, she had prepared this elaborate investigation.”

However, in the event that Hiiro was really a member of the Imp Race, then what would they do? Wouldn’t he have died?

“However, please be at ease. As these dishes were prepared by professional hands, even if a member of the Imp Race were to consume them, their bodies would be in a condition capable of running as the severe pain coursing throughout their bodies would be slightly suppressed.”

“Wait, you said slightly but—”

Hiiro interjected without thinking. Although it was good that he wouldn’t die, he wanted to make the criticism that they were perfectly fine with inflicting pain onto their benefactor.

“However, it is as I thought. Hiiro-sama certainly doesn’t seem to be a person of the Imp Race .”

The trio’s eyes stared towards Hiiro’s direction. Although Hiiro remained silent for a short period of time, he rubbed his head as he began to spit out a big sigh.

“Aa, that’s right. I’m not a part of the Imp Race .”

Chapter 68: The Butler's Finesse

At that moment, Hiiro clearly noticed Liliyn's eyes shine. It seemed that Liliyn had a personality similar to Rarashik.

If someone somehow found out he wasn't an Evila, it would become troublesome in the future. It would be even more troublesome if the Evila found out that he was human.

(What should I do...)

He had no obligation to answer her question, however, unlike Rarashik, the person before him looked warlike, cunning and generally uncontrollable.

(If it's come to this, I guess I should escape with the Transfer word.) Hiiro took a sharp breath and swallowed. He just remembered that he didn't know the location of Mikazuki. Silva lead her to a grazing ground nearby. However, remembering the words he set up before, Hiiro realized he could use them to gauge Mikazuki's location.

Closing his eyes, he could sense the whereabouts of his magic. He sensed two words nearby. It was undoubtedly Mikazuki. She was nearby, however, there was no way to accurately pinpoint her location unless he exited the house.

Transfer could only be used to go to places that he has been to before. There was a chance that he could appear outside the house. Thus, it would be best to exit the house before casting the spell.

(This is bad. Even if I teleported outside, it would take some time to look for Mikazuki. I would also have to write the Transfer word again to get out of this place. But...) It would take too much time. It took a long time to just write the words. It was highly probable that he would be caught while doing so. Also, if he used a two-character word, all the single-character words would disappear. This would also include the ones set up on Mikazuki.

Furthermore, they were people who could sense even the smallest amount of magic. If he was found out, they would immediately grow wary and restrain him right away.

(...It would be great if I can complete the word Transfer with less strokes.) Even though it was a word with a very useful effect, it took a long time to cast due to the number of stroke required to write the word.

(That aside, this whimsical person. What would happen if I showed hostility...) Thus, even though the only word he could activate was Pry, he was unable to cast it due to the circumstances. It was clear that the moment Hiiro released his magic power, he would be noticed. As such, it might be seen as Hiiro taking hostile action, making the situation even more bothersome.

Hiiro desperately tried to find a peaceful way to resolve the situation, yet, he was having a hard time

coming up with one.

“So, who the heck are you?”

Hihiro started back at Liliyn’s inquisitive eyes.

“...I am me, nothing less or more.”

“Kukuku, did you think that I would be satisfied with such a play on words?”

At that moment, Hihiro felt a shiver down his spine. Although the air of intimidation surrounding her was different from Rarashik, he could still feel pressure coming from her.

“Feeeeeeeeee...”

Shamoe looked alternately between her master and Hihiro as she released a flustered cry. At that moment, Silva stood up stiffly and spoke.

“Mumumu!”

Silva suddenly took out something from his chest. The other three focused on him.

“Good! These are good!”

Silva seemed to be looking at book, however, the nasal cavities increased in size while doing so.

“Nofo! Nofo! Nofo Fofof! This is it!”

“.....”

Unable to understand him at all, the other three just stared at him.

“...What are you doing, Silva?”

Unable to endure the situation, Liliyn inquired. Silva opened the book and showed an image of a female figure wearing a swimsuit. In Earth’s terms it would be a gravure photo. Silva cried in joy “Please look Ojou-sama! The line on the hip...such a beautiful line!”

“.....”

“Look at that attractive body, a body so unexpectedly fascinating that it’s full of dreams. Aah, how I long to be buried in such a fascinating curves...”

“...I...I see...”

She rotated her shoulder and then,

*Shun*¹⁵⁴~

Something approached Silva’s bosom at high speed.

*Bogo*¹⁵⁵~!

“Nyo he~!”

Like a world boxing champion, a fist collided with Silva’s chin.

*Baki*¹⁵⁶!

Silva’s head flew and buried itself in the ceiling and hung there.

“If you wanted to be buried, then be buried in there for the rest of your life!”

“Feeeeeeee~!? Silva-samaaaaaa!”

Shamoe shrieked in panic, trying to confirm Silva’s well-being. Yet, it seemed that he had once again fallen silent.

“.....*Phew*, I’ve lost interest. Shamoe, I’ll be returning to my room. Please take care of the guest when he gets tired.”

“I u-understand.”

Hiiro glanced at the girl who left the dining room and returned to her room. He exhaled in relief.

(Good grief. I somehow managed to survive but...)

Hiiro looked at the hentai whose body was still wiggling with his head stuck in the ceiling.

(This Jii-san, he deliberately changed the topic...)

Even though it wasn’t beneficial to him, he interrupted his master’s conversation and saved Hiiro. It was likely because Hiiro was his benefactor. However, even putting that into consideration, Hiiro felt that Silva had a strong sense of duty.

“Nofofofofo! I thought I was going to die! Nofofofofo!”

When Hiiro finally returned to the guest room, Silva returned as well without a scratch. Looking at Silva’s smile, Hiiro could not help but look at Silva’s body with scepticism.

“I guess I should be saying...thanks?”

“Nh? What do you mean?”

It seem that he was completely oblivious of it. If he wanted to pretend it wasn’t a big deal, then Hiiro decided to follow suit as he pretended the previous event didn’t occur.

“Mind if I ask you something?”

“Yes, you may. You may ask me anything about a woman’s body”

“I don’t give a damn about that.”

“...If that is your desire.”

He wanted to say it was too bad, yet, there was something else he wanted to ask.

“You sure it’s alright? Bringing a suspicious person like me into this mansion?”

“Suspicious? Whatever do you mean?”

“A person who isn’t of the Imp race yet has the appearance of one. A person like me. You let such an extremely suspicious individual approach your master, you know?”

“Fumu.....mumumu.”

Silva groaned as he placed a hand on a chin, and when Hihiro thought he was going to respond he took out book.

Bokon!

As Hihiro thought he was going to read the book, he smacked Silva over the head.

“Nofofofofo! You are aware that it hurts, yes?”

“Don’t say something like that when you weren’t hurt at all! Hurry up and answer the question Jii-san!”

“No, certainly, ever since I had met you, I had planned to take you here.”

“.....?”

“As a butler, it is very important to understand people.”

Hihiro remembered that he said something like this before.

“If I thought you would endanger my master, I would not have brought you to this mansion.”

“.....”

“Since I had determined that bringing you here would cause no problems, I wanted to express my gratitude to you by all means necessary.”

Either way, it seemed that the master didn’t hold any hostility toward Silva since the beginning. His explanation was not something that could be accepted easily, but it made Hihiro relieved either way.

“In addition to that, the most important thing is a person’s heart. That not only applies to me but also my master, and Shamoe as well.”

“That Akai-chibi¹⁵⁷?”

“Nofo!? Akai-chibi?”

Silva had a shocked and frightful expression on his face. Following which, he exhaled as he began to speak.

“Nofofofofo! To call my master by that name, you are certainly a reckless gentleman. Nofofofofo!”

“What’s so weird about it? She has red hair and a short body, thus Akai-chibi. Well? Isn’t it easy to remember?”

“Nofofofofo! Usually if one were to insult the master, they would have to be brought to justice. Yet, hearing it from your mouth, it’s so strange that it is funny! Nofofofofo!”

“Well, I don’t know what’s so funny about it but like you said before, the most important part of a person is their heart. Does the Akai-chibi believe that as well? I can’t really tell?”

As Liliyn seemed to be someone who would dispel their frustration through any means necessary, Hihiro did not believe that she held this belief.

“No, no. You are not mistaken. If my master wasn’t like that, we would have been kicked out of the mansion a long time ago.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“Fu~n.”

It seemed that the other two also had their circumstances, yet Hihiro wasn’t particularly interested.

“That aside, I’ve already eaten so I’m gonna leave, alright?”

If Hihiro stayed here any longer, Liliyn would probably pursue him again.

“Well I do not mind, however, it is going to be evening soon. During the evening, lots of S-rank monsters will appear.”

“Like the Grand Slimes in the grasslands a while back?”

“No, much stronger ones.”

The grasslands were dangerous enough for Hiiiro. Considering that he might encounter even stronger monsters at this time, he determined that it would be a good idea not to go outside.

“Is this mansion safe?”

“Yes. Here, the master has set up a barrier.”

“.....The Akai-chibi is really strong, huh.”

“That is true...she is strong enough to make a dragon shake in fear... I think that is about right?”

He was not sure how to digest this information. Regarding how strong little girls were in this world, it provided ample evidence to be wary and fearful of them. Given how the strength of Rarashik and Liliyn, Hihiro sighed as he thought that all the little girls in this world would be just as strong.

“Since that is the case, it would be a good idea if Hihiro-sama would pay attention to my master’s mood.”

After saying that, Silva who guided Hihiro to his room, bowed and then left. From now on it would be night. Hihiro laid down on the bed in the guest room and let out a sigh.

(A lot of things happened today huh...)

Hihiro could leave any time during the night, but thinking of the delicious fish he had this evening, he wanted to remain and taste it again by all means.

If something were to happen, he was optimistic that he could deal with it using **Word Magic** . As he was planning how he would leave tomorrow, he closed his tired eyes and went to sleep.

As midnight approached, and everyone was fast asleep, the door of the room which Hihiro slept in opened quietly...

[Author’s Note: It seems that someone approaches.]

Translator/Editor's Notes

1. ↩ Shorty/midget, rude way to address kids or people shorter than yourself.
2. ↩ Uncle/male adult
3. ↩ An informal way of addressing an elderly male figure. (Affectionate 'Old-man' or Rude 'Old-fart'.)
4. ↩ Written as magical being/demon, read as Evila.
5. ↩ Written as Bear People, read as Bearnt.
6. ↩ His pronunciation is off here.
7. ↩ Hihiro is saying Bee in Japanese. Arnold says it in English.
8. ↩ Sound of putting food in one's mouth.
9. ↩ This man or woman ends all of his/her sentences with -nya. Yoraikun followed Nippon Ichi's example in the next chapter and uses dood to end his/her sentences. I prefer sticking with the original.
10. ↩ Yes, his last name is King.
11. ↩ Literally written as Ride Peak.
12. ↩ He/she ends sentences with-nya.
13. ↩ Japanese version of John Smith.
14. ↩ What's here are crying onomatopoeia, Yoraikun didn't know what to put.
15. ↩ An expression of affirmation. Usually used by, but not exclusive to, feminine, submissive people. Kind of like, 'Uh-huh' or 'Yeah'.
16. ↩ An expression of affirmation. Usually used by, but not exclusive to, masculine, dominant people. Kind of like, 'Uh-huh' or 'Yeah'.

17. ↩ Master
18. ↩ Snoring effects.
19. ↩
20. ↩ Slapping effect.
21. ↩ Smacking effect.
22. ↩ Uses Ore-sama to refer to himself
23. ↩ ‘ ’, note plural use for women, implies that Aquinas is also a woman as opposed to Unlimate Novel Failures’ description in Chapter 11.
24. ↩ Little girl/missy
25. ↩ Here’s my interpretation on the list of the techniques with their corresponding Japanese. ‘ ’—Frozen Fang, ‘ — ’—Assault of the Oppressive Ice Beast, ‘ — ’—Conversion, ‘ — ’—Divine Frost Surge, ‘ ’—The Ritual of Phenomen Final Fang. If anyone has any better suggestions, they’re welcome to say them. Frankly, I’ve almost given up.
26. ↩ ‘ ’. The last title can also be interpreted as an arrogant or unusual person. If anyone has any suggestions, feel free to make them.
27. ↩ Crackling sounds. Think of static electricity discharging.
28. ↩ Beast ears.
29. ↩ **Zoom** Think of a car, or doppler effect.
30. ↩ Probably saying something like ‘I will be fine’. No idea how to edit this. Well, I probably could, but too lazy to. For those who can’t read between the lines **pun**, think of Arnold getting shocked with electricity.
31. ↩ Silver Dragon
32. ↩ Punipuni is an expression that describes something soft and jelly like. Often used when referring to pudding or people with chubby cheeks. Or at least, that’s the best explanation I can come up with.
33. ↩ Not sure how to translate this. Think of it like a sound effect that indicates confusion. You’ll probably encounter it in anime as wooden block sounds.
34. ↩ An elongated ‘Tenmee’ which is a morphed version of ‘Temee’ which roughly translates to ‘You Bastard’.





















35. ↩ In regards to the bulging eyes. This would be directly translated as 'googly eyes'. For those who can't get a good picture, think as if the eyes are wide open and the irises are small and convulsing wildly. That's what Arnold is doing.
36. ↩ Boke is a variant of baka which is usually used by, but not exclusive to, people who speak the Kansai dialect.
37. ↩ The kanji for 'that street' is used here, yet the content seems to indicate that it meant 'it was as he said'. As I translate context, I have opted for this translation.
38. ↩ Thud/Bang/Slam/etc. effect
39. ↩ A sound which signifies Arnold receiving a strong impact.
40. ↩ Ou-baka = big idiot
41. ↩ It's written as 'specialty', pronounced phonetically as 'Schwartz'.
42. ↩ Sound of coughing.
43. ↩ Sound of cheeks getting stretched out.
44. ↩ Twitching sound effect.
45. ↩ A sigh.
46. ↩ A suffix used to show respect to the one addressed. Very formal and used to address someone of higher position (eg. a maid addressing her Master).
47. ↩ Signs of exasperation. Alternate translation: 'Argh, Geez'.
48. ↩ Onee-sama. A formal way of addressing an older sister figure in Japanese.
49. ↩ Kuclear repeats 'yokatta' which has a variety of translations. However, it is used as an expression of relief and joy.
50. ↩ Mimir repeats 'hai' which literally means 'yes'. I assumed that she was expressing her agreement and acceptance in regards to Kuclear's joy.
51. ↩ Japanese equivalent of 'Um'.
52. ↩ They use 'poka' which is an onomatopoeia expressing blanking out (I think). I couldn't be bothered to try and incorporate that into the sentence so...yeah.
53. ↩ Uun is different from Un. Un = Yes. Uun = No. Subtle, but there is a difference.

- 54. ↩ I'm really not too sure how to romanize this. Just imagine ears twitching.
- 55. ↩ You guessed it. Sound effect for light shining.
- 56. ↩ I tried finding a picture example of this but failed. You've probably seen this if you watch gag anime.
- 57. ↩ An expression mildly denoting exasperation. Think 'good grief'. Pretty much like 'sheesh' or 'geez'.
- 58. ↩ Sound of dull impact.
- 59. ↩ They both mean yes. 'Ou' is more manly/crass. 'Hai' is plain and proper,
- 60. ↩ Japanese equivalent of 'Hmm'. Sound indicating deep thought.
- 61. ↩ Think of **Flash** or something...(not sure. Consult Mr. Google).
- 62. ↩ Not two 'o's but an elongated O. Expresses surprise/amazement.
- 63. ↩ Alternate translation 'Bear-Old Man'.
- 64. ↩ Onomatopoeia representing loud, rapid footsteps.
- 65. ↩ An expression of irritation.
- 66. ↩ An expression of affirmation that's often used for psyching up one self. Think 'Alright!' or 'Yeah!'.
- 67. ↩ Japanese Onomatopoeia that basically means **sparkle**.
- 68. ↩ I don't even...I think they're referring to **this**.
- 69. ↩ Japanese Onomatopoeia for the sound of wings flapping.
- 70. ↩ Literally means fried chicken(bird).
- 71. ↩ Bun: Japanese Onomatopoeia for large air pressure (cause the bird's shaking head causes its feathers to fan a large amount of air).
- 72. ↩ An expression of scepticism? Basically, think 'Hmm' or 'is that so?'.
- 73. ↩ An expression of interest.
- 74. ↩ Kanji used for 'index finger' is for food and finger. Play on words, but basically, it means that Hiroyuki's 'food' switch was triggered.

75. ⇐ Equivalent of ‘Hmph’.
76. ⇐ This is another play on words. The romaji for ‘crescent’ is ‘mikazuki’ which is what Hihiro has named his Raidpic. It may/may not have any meaning here, but I thought I’d mention it.
77. ⇐ Counter stop is when the integer value for a stat is at its maximum, so the counter won’t increase anymore.
78. ⇐ Sound of running on a forest ground.
79. ⇐ Sound of someone stepping on something.
80. ⇐ Drumming sound.
81. ⇐ Not an easy one. I think it’s trying to say that the troll made a hammer with its hands by bringing them both together.
82. ⇐ Sound of ground being smashed, sending a shockwave.
83. ⇐ Sound of a something crashing in to the ground.
84. ⇐ Smash!
85. ⇐ I’m aware that previous translators have used Copy . However, the kanji used here ‘ ’ denotes change or transformation and not specific to ‘copying’. As such, I have chosen to use Change as my translation.
86. ⇐ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **nod**.
87. ⇐ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **tremble** or **shake**.
88. ⇐ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **flap**.
89. ⇐ In the previous chapter that I translated, the author used the kanji () for master/owner. In this chapter, he uses the kanji () for lord/owner (basically the same, but without the ‘person’/character). While I don’t know why he changed, I have followed suit.
90. ⇐ Sound of sword through a slimy body.
91. ⇐ Sound of a puff of fire appearing.
92. ⇐ Sound of something hitting a forcefield.
93. ⇐ Sound of a blade thrusting through an object.
94. ⇐ Boom!

95. ㄱ ㄱ Sound of spluttering.
96. ㄱ ‘ ’
97. ㄱ ‘ ’
98. ㄱ Sound of something moving.
99. ㄱ Sound of perfect landing.
100. ㄱ Sound of a body falling.
101. ㄱ A book hitting something.
102. ㄱ ‘ ’
103. ㄱ Eating ravenously. Mogu mogu = large chewing sound, Gokunshi = swallowing sound, Hamu = biting in to sound, Musha musha = small chewing sound, Gogu gogu gogu = drinking sound, Psha = sound of finally breathing.
104. ㄱ An incredibly informal way of addressing an elderly male. Think friendly ‘old-man’ or rude ‘old-fart’. This can be thought to be a variant of Ossan.
105. ㄱ This is a bit of a pun. An unbridled horse is made of the kanji for ‘Sky’ and ‘Horse’, but in this case, it’s a sky horse carriage.
106. ㄱ Lagoon = ‘ ’. For those that have better translations, feel free to suggest. Although, I doubt that this will be used again so...
107. ㄱ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **shine**.
108. ㄱ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **woosh** (I think). Just think of the sound that occurs when someone makes a rapid, sudden movement. The sudden movement causes friction with the wind (or fans it), making the sound.
109. ㄱ Sound of agony/pain/torment/death cry/etc.
110. ㄱ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **wriggle**.
111. ㄱ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **thump**. Think of something striking wood.
112. ㄱ Venom Insect = ‘ ’ with the ‘ ’ character read as ‘ ’. Again, better translations are welcome.
113. ㄱ An expression similar to a grunt of frustration.

114. ↩ The author uses the phrase ‘ ’ | nakanaka. This usually denotes to the subject being ‘pretty good’. As this made no sense when translated literally, I took some liberties in the translation.
115. ↩ An expression denoting joy in this context.
116. ↩ A term used to refer to a female of high status. Alternate translation: ‘My lady’ | ‘Mistress’.
117. ↩ Term used for ‘interject’ is **tsukkomi**. Couldn’t be bothered to try and incorporate it into the sentence.
118. ↩ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **rumble**.
119. ↩ Not sure if this is precise. Phrase used is ‘Japanese Earthquake Measurement’.
120. ↩ Katana | ‘ ’ is the kanji used here. As this is different from Sword | ‘ ’, I have translated it as such..
121. ↩ Expression denoting interest or confusion.
122. ↩ Expression used when someone is casually demonstrating effort. Similar to ‘hah!’ or a groan.
123. ↩ Sound of something getting pierced. The sound a pin makes when pierced into a pincushion.
124. ↩ Japanese onomatopoeia denoting the sound of exhalation.
125. ↩ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **patpat** (I think?). Not sure. Consult Mr. Google.
126. ↩ An alternative of Jii-san. As it does not have the suffix ‘-san’, it is considerable more informal/rude.
127. ↩ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **pop** (I think?). Don’t know how to explain this one. If you’ve watched anime, you’ve probably seen it.
128. ↩ Literally read as Katana-Smith. I thought it sounded weird so changed it to Swordsmith.
129. ↩ Hihiro’s nickname for Mikazuki. Literally means Drool (Yodare) Bird (Tori).
130. ↩ Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **poking out** (I think?). Think of a wood block sound. If you’ve watched anime, you’ve probably seen it.
131. ↩ M = masochist
132. ↩ Tripping sound.
133. ↩ She repeats Yokatta | ‘ ’ which is basically an expression of relief. I have used variations as I think it fits it better.

134.  Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **thud**.
135.  Hard to translate. Means, 'Well~' or 'Oh man~' (I think). Go Google it.
136.  '...Japanese onomatopoeia **jingling**
137.  This is hard to translate without introducing an entity. The Japanese is ' ' which basically means 'Previous Statement Withdrawal'. While I could have simply used this, I felt it was clunky so I introduced a 'narrator' entity for this sentence only. I could have used Hiiro, however, it is not indicated that this is Hiiro's thoughts.
138.  Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **growl**.
139.  Expression conveying that the person is flustered.
140.  Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **crunch** I think.
141.  Cry of pain/agony/misery/etc.
142.  ' ' | Fe is an expression of startlement. I'm fairly certain that it is different from a certain girl's popular saying 'Fue'.
143.  Not sure who's speaking here. I'm assuming Hiiro but could very well be Liliyn.
144.  Japanese onomatopoeia which basically means **bang**. Think of a more hollow sound.
145.  Lol is expressed as 'w' in Japanese. W is short for warau | ' ' which means 'laugh'. As there were two 'w's I opted for two Lols. The more you know...?
146.  A Japanese variant of 'Hm?'
147.  A Japanese expression that is customarily spoken before partaking in a meal. Often translated as 'Thank you for the food'.
148.  -zo is a suffix often appended to sentences to display masculinity? Not sure about this, but didn't really know how to translate it so...
149.  Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **bite**.
150.  Japanese onomatopoeia meaning **chew**.
151.  This is literally what it translates to. Consult Mr. G if you don't know what it is.
152.  A Japanese expression that displays intrigue. Think 'well?'.
153.  She actually states that Hiiro is in the 'center of her stomach'. Possibly some word play

associated with Hiirō's appetite. Either way, as translating it directly left much to be desired, I took some liberties with the translation.

154. ㄥ A swift and decisive movement.

155. ㄥ Something hitting something hard.

156. ㄥ Sound of neck cracking.

157. ㄥ Red-shorty

Credits

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